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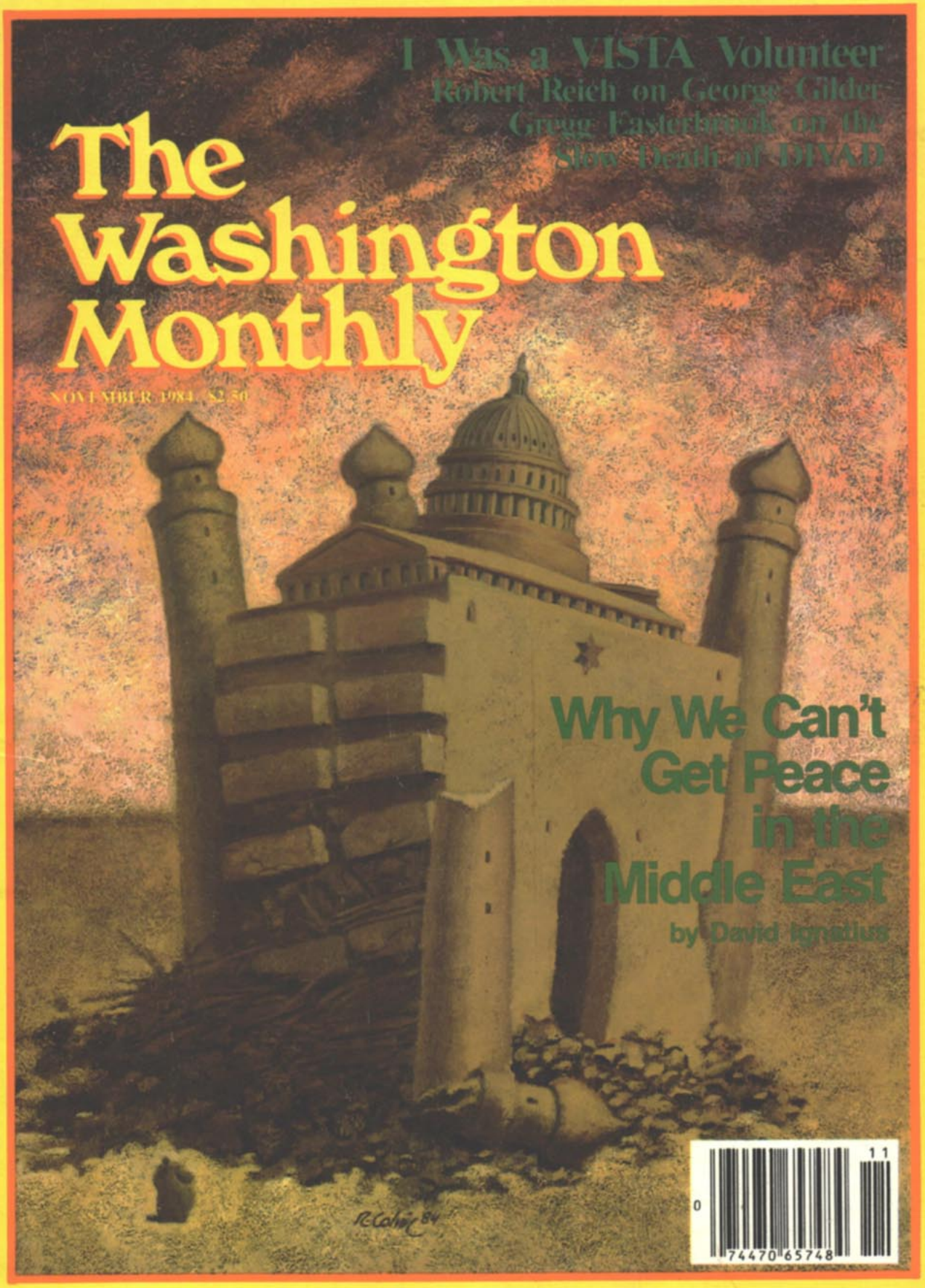

Why We Can't Get Peace in the Middle East

by David Ignatius

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LETTERS

What is neoliberalism?

Mickey Kaus's review of my book, *The Neoliberals* ["Too Much Technology, Not Enough Soul," September], was one of the most profoundly dishonest pieces of criticism I have read in quite some time, a mix of half-baked notions and unoriginal thoughts masquerading as insight. It saddens me, because it confirms a general impression that's been afoot in the land that *The Washington Monthly* has abandoned the principles upon which it was founded—the promise to give objective, irreverent reports on the doings of the bureaucracy—in order to promote its own parochial interests. But all this I could stomach. One sin, however, is unforgivable: Kaus's review is dumb.

Let me try to summarize the reasons Kaus disliked *The Neoliberals*. The focus on the economy is "disappointing"; many of the ideas detailed in it are "bloodless"; the principles of neoliberalism, as defined by me, are "dry" and "technical." Kaus further faults me for mentioning him only twice. This last, though a half-joke, is really quite telling, because it encapsulates Kaus's primary complaint: I do not pay enough attention to the ideas expressed over the years by *The Washington Monthly*, ideas like a new WPA and merit pay for teachers and elimination of the Davis-Bacon Act. "Ideological infidelity," Kaus calls it.

It may come as a surprise to your reviewer and editors, but—gasp!—I did *not* set out to flack for *The Washington Monthly*. Kaus seems not to understand this. He refers to me, somewhat facetiously, as "Comrade" Rothenberg. Charles Peters has publicly called me a "neoliberal journalist." In case there's any confusion—in the event some Senate committee in the distant future intends to investigate this thing called "neoliberalism"—let me state plainly that I am not now nor have I ever been a "neoliberal." I am simply a journalist, who has attempted to define and analyze a burgeoning phenomenon. And *The Neoliberals*, unlike the recent fare of this magazine, is not a manifesto. It is, rather, an effort at objective journalism. I'll admit that it has faults; I am, for instance, unhappy with the style and organization of the book. But at least I can say, " 'Tis a poor thing, but mine own"—not Charlie Peters's, not Mickey Kaus's, but mine.

This bothers Kaus, and he proceeds to rectify my errors by parading his own uninformed biases across your pages. He would extrapolate from his own disinterest in economic policy to a doctrine for an entire movement, not pausing for a moment to consider that maybe, just maybe, the politicians associated with the new liberalism focus on economic policy almost exclusively. He makes bold assertions like, "[Neoliberals] are angry that the biggest obstacles to the revived WPA-style work program that would do the most to help the poor are now the construction and municipal unions. . . ." Funny, no neoliberals mentioned those obstacles to *me*, and I interviewed a few dozen. In fact, not *one* mentioned a revived WPA at all. What's more, common sense indicates that the biggest obstacle to such a bureaucratic monstrosity is that it is organizationally impossible, and that there is no proof it would do anything more for the poor than past public works programs have done. To maintain a healthy skepticism of bureaucracy and technocracy does not absolve one of learning to cope with and utilize them. Troublesome as they may seem, both are realities of the modern post-industrial state. And while the sentiment behind a revived WPA is a noble one, it does your magazine no good to lead a cavalry charge while riding a hobby horse.

Kaus peppers his review with many similar silly statements and ideas. "Neoliberals would carve out a communitarian sphere where class distinctions are dissolved," he writes. Yeah? Them and what army? To Kaus, neoliberals promote entrepreneurship because it is "fun," not really because it creates wealth— "Money is, after all, only money," he writes. Nice sentiment, but most entrepreneurs I know aren't so complacent about money. Then again, most of them don't benefit from the luxury of having their businesses subsidized by fat cats.

In his effort to disparage my book, Kaus even makes a few errors. He trots out the theory of comparative advantage to prove that neoliberals can't possibly be free-traders, and then criticizes me for citing only Reuben Askew as a supporter of the concept. It is precisely *because* of comparative advantage, however, that neoliberals—rightly or wrongly—advocate concentrating our efforts on industrial revitalization, human-capital policies, and the possibility of a universal right to training, arguing that our edge will always be in what they call "knowledge-intensive" industries." Oh, and your readers may be interested to know that I also cite, on the free trade issue, Bill Bradley, Lester Thurow, Robert Reich, and Gary Hart, among others. And Kaus would do well to study the problems of our trade deficit, capital mobility, and uncoordinated international monetary policies. He may find my phrasing inelegant, but he should know that our autos are uncompetitive not only because of bad corporate decision-making but because the dollar costs so much.

I won't go on. Kaus would substitute the inventions of his own and his editors' minds for research. I follow a slightly higher standard (one which would have me refuse to write a review where I have admitted conflicts of interest). While I do not disagree with many of the sentiments he expressed, and believe that they do have a place in contemporary political discourse, a book review is no place for personalized homilies.

Be that as it may, there is a darker side to *l'affaire Kaus*. I fear *The Washington Monthly* has become what it once decried, an insider, susceptible to the same petty jealousies, suspicions, and rages as other members of the Washington journalism clubhouse. As a foundling in the early seventies, this magazine was

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part of a classic reform tradition. You believed that knowledge was power, and with knowledge of the bureaucracy, we would have the power to understand and correct its flaws. Many of your graduates—Fallows, Branch, Lemann, Bethell—have continued to do the kind of work that first inspired me as a fledgling journalist. Today, however, your journal seems more intent on creating its own knowledge, and uses its resources to promote your "Gospel"—as it was once known with humor but now with misplaced reverence—as if it truly was inspired doctrine. Much of it is good, of course; much of it needs rethinking, and much of it is just plain bad. But you now seem incapable of self-criticism, let alone of accepting objective analysis from the outside. Rather, you have grown complacent, smug in your already developed answers, disdainful of outsiders with questions and solutions of their own...just like any other bureaucracy.

Isn't this just what has happened to liberalism?

RANDALL ROTHENBERG
Princeton, New Jersey

The author replies:

Rothenberg charges that I criticize his book out of pique, because it doesn't pay enough attention to my, or *The Washington Monthly*'s, ideas. This misstates the nature of both his book and my criticism. Rothenberg did not just go out and talk to "neoliberals" to find out what they were thinking, the way other journalists might go out and talk to readily identifiable groups like southern state Democratic chairmen. Many of his subjects probably did not know they were "neoliberals" until Rothenberg called them that. His book was a potentially valuable effort precisely because, by bringing disparate political strands together, and demonstrating their ideological affinity, Rothenberg might, as he says, "define" a *new* movement. But if *The Neoliberals* is a legitimate exercise in political trend-spotting, it is also legitimate to criticize it on the grounds that it leaves out a large chunk of the trend and so misses what may be significant or appealing about it.

I argued that Rothenberg gave a "stunted" picture of neoliberalism, emphasizing the arid, pragmatic high-tech proposals of the "Atari Democrats," failing to discern in them any distinct neoliberal values, and failing to reconcile them convincingly with what he himself calls "neoliberalism's communitarian theme." It simply isn't true that the ideas Rothenberg left out are espoused only by *Washington Monthly* employees or members of their immediate families. For example, economist Lester Thurow, in his book, *The Zero-Sum Society* (hyped by Rothenberg as a "bible to neoliberals"), proposed a WPA-style jobs program two years before this magazine wrote about it. Gary Hart has made a similar proposal. The idea is on the table, so to speak. Rothenberg implicitly chose to ignore it when he was pulling together his "definition," just as he ignored the

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When ITT announced last July that it was going to cut dividends by two-thirds in order to divert more money into investment—in other words, when it did just what it should be doing to help rebuild its productive base—money managers panicked. They started an anti-ITT stock stampede that dropped the price of the company's stock by a third and made it a potential candidate for a takeover. Such is the power of the individuals who control the billions of dollars amassed in pension funds, insurance companies, mutual funds, and the like. *Business Week* illustrates how the incessant quest for immediate gain can do real harm to our long-term economic health. One especially notable villain in this gallery of short-term thinkers is the pension funds, which last year dumped an average of 62.1 percent of the stocks in their portfolios and replaced them with other shares (as compared to a turnover rate of 21 percent ten years ago). The *Business Week* writers offer convincing evidence that if money managers continue to churn their portfolios, the companies that choose to invest in research and development rather than maximize quarterly profits—the companies America needs—will be the principal victims.

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tensions between "Atari Democrats" and other neoliberals.

Unfortunately, Rothenberg's caricature of our movement as a group of high-tech types obsessed with investment, retraining, and "appropriate technology" (whatever that is) has now become so widespread that many who will participate in the coming debate over the direction of the Democratic party tend to dismiss neoliberalism, put off by Rothenberg's unappetizing description.

Rothenberg also misstates my criticism of his chapter on trade. I said that "human capital" theory, not the theory of "comparative advantage," tends to undermine a pure free-trade position because nations will try to build up the knowledge of their workers ("human capital") behind trade barriers. Nor did I suggest that entrepreneurs don't care about money, only that many also seek psychic rewards. Finally, I thought it was the necessary and honest thing to disclose whatever petty professional rivalry I might have with Rothenberg, letting readers know what my biases might be so they could make up their own minds about my review.

One factual error I would like to correct is my statement that FDR tried to "corner the ice market in his early years." It was lobsters, not ice.

The case for Scheuer

I take strong exception to much of the article on the House of Representatives which appeared in your September issue ["The Best and the Worst of the House of Representatives," Timothy Noah]. I've known and worked with Congressman James H. Scheuer for nearly 20 years. He is among the most effective and respected Democrats in the House.

As a member of the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, I can attest to his hard work as chairman of the Population and Development Task Force. His work is all the more impressive given the time constraints imposed by his chairmanship of the board of directors of the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. The Global Committee is the first association to bring together world parliamentary leaders, former heads of government, and experts from international organizations to provide parliamentarians with program knowledge and organizational resources to enhance their participation in population and development policymaking.

His international success in the eighties should come as no surprise to those of us familiar with his pioneering work on population in the sixties and seventies.

(continued on page 60)

Correction:

In our September issue, we published a story that included allegations that Rep. Tom Luken of Ohio had thrown a telephone at one of his assistants and accidentally locked himself into his office. We published these allegations believing them to be true, but now retract them as untrue. The article also falsely implied that Luken made extensive use of interns to contact PACs. We apologize for this error.

The Washington Monthly

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The Washington Monthly

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TILTING AT WINDMILLS

In this issue one of our editors recounts his experiences as a VISTA volunteer on Manhattan's Lower East Side (see page 38). A more recent volunteer worker in that neighborhood is former President Jimmy Carter, who put his carpentry skills to use helping to renovate an 80-year-old tenement into low-priced cooperative apartments. Carter traveled to New York City by bus with 40 of his neighbors from Plains, Georgia and stayed at a local Baptist church along with everyone else. The sponsor of the project was Habitat for Humanity, an organization based in Americus, Georgia that seeks to provide "a decent house and a decent community for God's people in need."

Jimmy Carter had his failings as a president, but it is hard to think of another ex-president who has shown as little concern about outward status and has brought as much dignity and genuine humanitarian concern to that difficult ex-officehood as he.

For all Ronald Reagan's talk about the volunteer spirit and helping your neighbor, how often in his life has he practiced what he preaches? What made many people feel uncomfortable about Carter was the suspicion that his morality might be sincere. When he talked about charity and service, you knew he was going to roll up his own sleeves, and you might be expected to do the same. But when Ronald Reagan, non-churchgoer and absentee parent, talks about sacrifice or sharing, we pat ourselves on the back and reach for another beer....

(Charles Peters is on vacation this month.)

Another of our editors is a new father. Here are his thoughts:

Leaving aside the things about which all new fathers gush, what was striking about it was the feeling that here, at last, was the democratic experience for which *The Washington Monthly* has been longing these many years. The old war-movie scene in which green inductees named Izzy Goldberg, Booker T. Jones, and Carmine Pelleteri nervously eye each other and shuffle their feet while they wait for the drill sergeant to introduce himself has been made obsolete by the all-volunteer military. But Lamaze class comes pretty close.

Our group of 16 people had three races and four or five occupational classes represented, and like Goldberg, Jones, and Pelleteri, by the end of six weeks they had gotten to like and respect each other, as well as having been whipped into lean childbearing trim.

If Lamaze is like basic training (it certainly has the same generous component of wasted time), then the labor room at the hospital is like the foxhole in which, in the movie version, Pelleteri might sacrifice himself to save Goldberg's and Jones's lives. Nothing like that happens, but there is a little of the feeling, common to combat veterans, that you'll never be the same again. If you're a product of the post-World War II meritocracy, you're subliminally trained to think that anything that's difficult must be accomplishable by only a tiny, elite fraction of the population, as is the case with organic chemistry or the

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bar exam. But here is something much harder—yet everybody does it: the woman screaming in the next room, the 15-year-old girl down the hall, the bubble-headed debutante over in the recovery room.

But this Brigadoon of classlessness ended abruptly in the delivery room. For five hours a registered nurse, who was one of the calmest and most competent people we'd ever met, guided us through the storm, performing the pelvic exams, de facto prescribing drugs, guiding the baby into the birth canal. Then, in the delivery room, she had to put her hand on the baby's head to keep him inside—the doctor was on his way over, and because this was how he earned his fee (which was more for five minutes' work than the nurse would make for her five hours), it was outside the nurse's jurisdiction. After an agonizing minute or two he swept in, whisked out the baby, cut the umbilical cord, and departed. When he was gone the nurse shrugged, as if to say, Welcome to the real world, kid....

Last summer's issue of *Ministries*, "the magazine for Christian leaders," featured a survey of pastors' salaries that raises an interesting distinction between the upper and lower classes. According to scripture, a congregation is supposed to pay its pastor about what the average parishioner makes. (For proof, *Ministries* cited 1 Corinthians 9:7-11: "When the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?")

It turns out, however, that congregations in the lower salary range somehow scrape up the money to pay their ministers more than they themselves make, while those whose congregations are in the upper range pay their ministers less. This suggests that while the poor regard their spiritual leaders as their social superiors, the rich regard them as their social inferiors....

Let's say you get a new job and have to move across the country. Unfortunately, you find it difficult to sell your house, even though you've already bought a new one. So you—well, frankly you get a little behind on your mortgage payments. More than a year behind, in fact. You're not a bad person; you just got in a little over your head, as anyone might.

Fortunately, you have considerate friends back home. One of them buys your house at the kind of price you've been looking for, then resells it for $70,000 less, absorbing this loss himself. Another lends you more than $100,000, and it's okay if you miss several months of your payments. Still another gives you a great stock tip, and then lends you $15,000 to buy the stock—with no interest.

If you own a house, you might find the first part of this story plausible, but you'd probably find the second part a fantasy—you may have very loyal friends, but they're probably not *that* loyal. Now imagine that you're the right-hand man of the president of the United States. Doesn't it seem that if you had that kind of job people might be willing to do wonderful favors for you, for no reason other than to feel close to you?

This story is of course Ed Meese's, and the key to it is that, even if he didn't give his friends federal jobs as a quid pro quo, it is inconceivable that they would have helped him in the same way had his new job in Washington been as a professor at George Washington University Law School. The independent counsel's report on Meese understandably didn't get into this issue, concentrating instead on the strict legality of what he did. But Washington, with its fixation on finding smoking guns, has reacted to the finding that Meese did nothing illegal by letting him off the hook entirely. In fact Meese committed an important sin, which was taking advantage of the opportunity a top government job affords to live by different rules from ordinary people. Washington at its highest and smoothest levels is not a quid pro quo town, but rather one of sweeter and subtler blandishments, of which the real estate help Meese got is a classic example. Our high officials ought to resist these; it is one of the strengths of our democracy that the people who run government live only somewhat better than most of us. It's too bad that this is a point that the

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press and congressional committees are anthropologically incapable of making....

How does Felix Rohatyn do it? Is it an elixir that wafts from his pores? He has become the 1980s version of Henry Kissinger, the powerful figure whose mere presence stupefies usually capable journalists.

The latest victim is David McClintick, a first-rate reporter heretofore best known for his willingness to stand up to Hollywood's titans. (His best-selling book, *Indecent Exposure*, told the story of the David Begelman scandals.) But put him in Rohatyn's clutches and what happens? McClintick wrote a cover story for *The New York Times Magazine* about Rohatyn in August. For sheer servility and ill-concealed yearning to walk among the rich, the story is hard to top. Much of the article concerned the annual Easter egg hunt that Rohatyn holds for his best friends at his house in Southampton, Long Island:

"Although the day is bright and sunny, the north breeze is chilly, and the guests—who include the Henry Kissingers [maybe *he's* the culprit after all], Oscar de la Renta, William Paley, labor leader Victor Gotbaum and his wife Betsy, and Mariella Agnelli, the wife of the Fiat magnate—bundle in sweaters and jackets as they make their way about the garden and grounds of the two-story grey shingle house. Carrying dainty wicker baskets ribboned in pink and lined with green cellophane grass, they peer into bushes, hedges, shrubs, trees, drainpipes, and other places where Rohatyn and his wife, Elizabeth—the instigator of the hunts—have hidden about 80 vividly dyed and painted eggs....

"The oddities imbue the proceedings with elements of drollery and latent silliness, which are just the tones that Elizabeth Rohatyn, a Memphis Episcopalian, wants to exploit. A slim, attractive woman with a luminous smile and short, streaked blond hair, Elizabeth has an explosive wit, and a richly developed sense of the ironic and absurd, that her friends and even her husband occasionally have difficulty keeping up with....

"Felix Rohatyn (pronounced ROE-uh-t'n) is the perfect host through it all...lively and twinkly as he circulates, freshens drinks, and maintains a stream of droll commentary on the egg hunt. Rohatyn's own acute sense of humor is his wife's best spur: as he offers withering quips about the cheating, she teases, cajoles, and upbraids the searchers until the laughter convulses everyone, most of all Rohatyn himself, whose light, youthful speaking voice breaks frequently into falsetto guffaws at his wife's and the group's antics...."

Apart from making you wonder where McClintick parked his brain and conscience when writing this article, the piece made a nice if inadvertent point. Its title was "Life at the Top," and, on its evidence, the top is not a haven for textbook civic virtues. When the fun is over and Felix gets down to work ("the day I don't put my business first is the day I'll be out of business"), he flits around the globe arranging mergers and takeovers, rearranging the world's assets rather than increasing them. "I'm worried about the investment banking industry because I think the substance of many of the things we do is getting questionable," he broods. "Sometimes it's getting more and more difficult for me to do the things we do because in the last analysis I don't think that's what I want on my tombstone."

Which suggests a question for Rohatyn's next interviewer, if he can avoid McClintick's fate: Felix, why don't you quit?...

Walter Mondale's defects are all too obvious, not least to readers of this magazine. But the heart sinks at the possibility of a second Reagan landslide, which is widely anticipated (including by friends in the Mondale campaign) as we go to press. A one-sided vote in 1984 would carry the same unfortunate message it did in 1972: it would give the incumbent that most dangerous of illusions, the sense of "mandate." There is a kind of irresponsibility to almost everything Ronald Reagan has wrought: fiscal irresponsibility ("we'll pay for it tomorrow"), social irresponsibility ("I'm all right, Jack"), and personal irresponsibility ("Don't bother me with the facts"). Does this deserve ringing reaffirmation?

The last time the Democrats were thumped, there was much talk about the need to "rethink" the party's platform and come up

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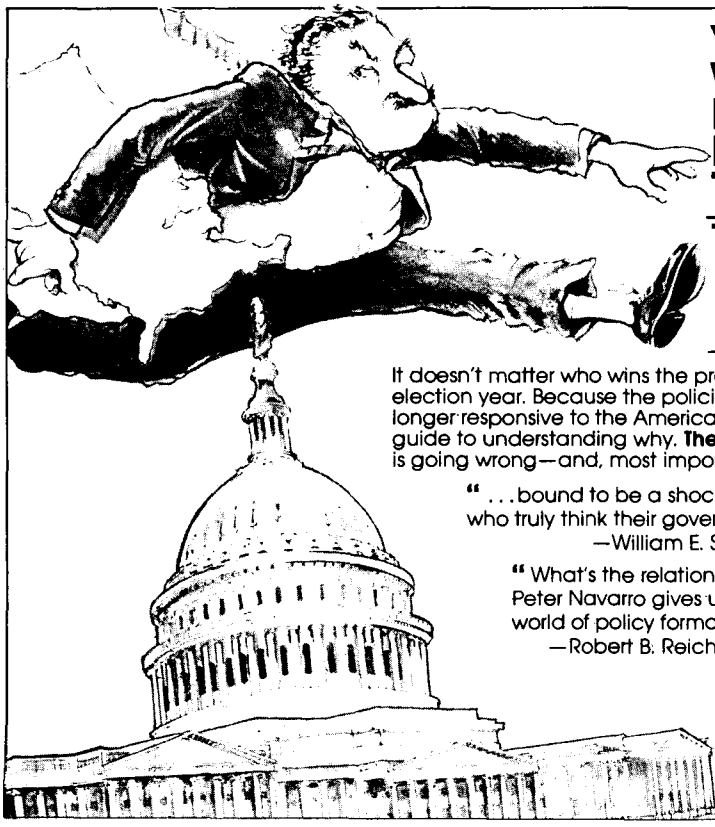
with some "new ideas." While we want to stay in the new-ideas business, we suspect that there's an even greater challenge for the Democrats. Walter Mondale got the nomination mainly because many Democrats believed that they had to appeal to voters bloc by bloc—teachers, Hispanics, women, etc. Mondale's weakness shows how wrong that view is. Ronald Reagan has never been known for asking people to rise above self-interest, but he has proven that an appeal to larger goals, even misleading ones, can attract people whose own interests run the other way. Why else would any autoworker vote for him?

The Democrats' next task is political, in the noblest and (unfortunately) most difficult sense of the term. When Gary Hart and Ernest Hollings proposed various "new ideas," those men and their views were instantly classified as threats by the union leadership and by minorities. That is, they lacked Ronald Reagan's gift for persuading people to look past automatic group responses.

That job should be easier for new-idea Democrats than for Reagan. A different approach to tax policy and entitlement programs, for instance, would do more good for the Democrats' constituency than the Republicans', and a revived, universal draft would reduce the chances of another poor-man's war. But at the moment too few people believe that: Gary Hart ended the race with virtually no black or labor support. For anyone uncomfortable with Reagan, here is the job for the next four years: making ourselves seem less like threats to each other, finding the large areas where we can agree. . . .

There may be one faint glimmer of hope in the possibility of four more years. The president has now established his masculinity in foreign affairs beyond dispute. He is approaching his twilight years. He wants deeply to be remembered as a great president, and he must know down in his heart that history's warm glow will fall upon that president who stems the nuclear arms race. Ronald Reagan's sense of the spotlight—the warm glow—is sure. It just might encourage him to make his final presidential role that of peacemaker.

—The editors



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Why DIVAD Wouldn't Die

Last month Defense Secretary Weinberger more or less killed DIVAD, the $4.5 billion automated antiaircraft gun that had come to symbolize rigged tests, unrealistic plans, undisciplined spending, and technology that doesn't work. Weinberger said that production of DIVAD—suspended since last winter—would remain suspended and that only money for a final test next year would be left in the budget. Technically DIVAD is still alive, but all signs point to the project's going out with a whimper rather than a bang. This would be fitting, since it was never able to produce a bang on the battlefield.

DIVAD is the first production-level weapons program to be shut down since the Army's Cheyenne attack helicopter was canceled 15 years ago. The B1 was "canceled" in 1977 but brought back to life: the opposition had centered on political, arms control, and budgetary concerns, not its flight performance. DIVAD is the first weapon since Cheyenne—and one of the very few since World War II—to be stopped because it doesn't work.

But what did it take to kill the program? Things had to go haywire to such an absurd degree that even institutional Washington couldn't ignore DIVAD any longer. In order for DIVAD to fail, all of the following had to occur. The project had to: begin existence in the realm of fantasy, with nearly all real-world combat conditions, especially the need to hit maneuvering aircraft, assumed away; proceed to flunk its tests, even what around the Pentagon are known as "magic" tests, by huge margins; be condemned in reports by the General Accounting Office, the Congressional Budget Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the Heritage Foundation, the Department of Defense inspector general, and two military-run Pentagon offices; have its contractor's performance officially declared "totally unacceptable" by the Army and have $84 million in contractor overcharges claimed by an official Defense Department report; have information on DIVAD's failures withheld from the selection board that authorized production; have a former executive of the company that

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By Gregg Easterbrook

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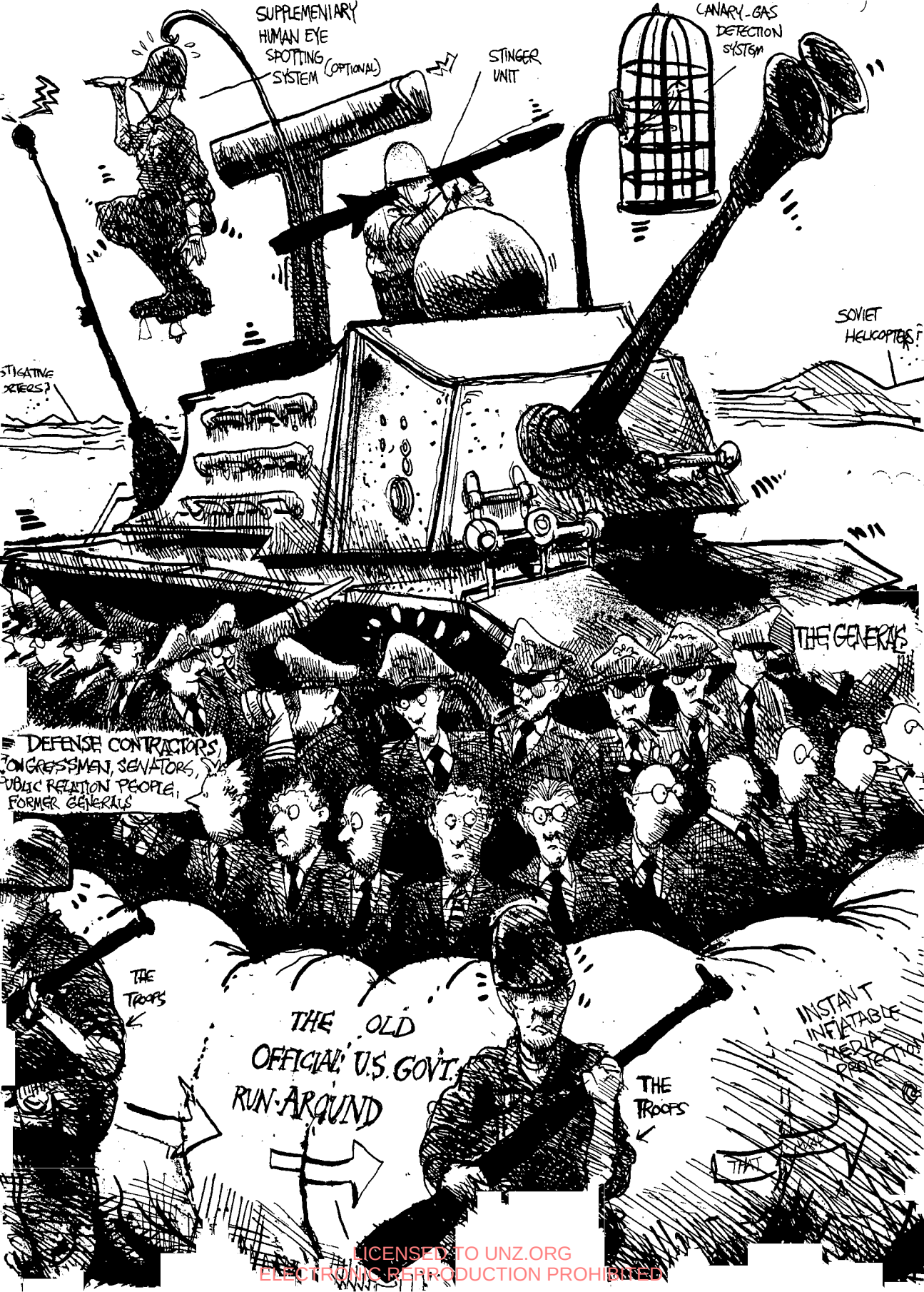

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makes DIVAD sitting on that board; have the gun, which is supposed to be "interoperable" with NATO antiaircraft weapons, use ammunition that isn't interoperable; have its costs, $6.8 million to $8 million per unit, rise to four times the cost of the tanks it is supposed to defend; and have other, proven antiaircraft weapons that cost a fraction as much be rejected.

And even this wasn't enough to do DIVAD in. Had the Army not made two comical mistakes in rapid sequence, the weapon might still be in production. First, ordered by Weinberger to stage a "realistic" test that would prove DIVAD's worth once and for all, the Army instead staged a phony test in which "targets" were equipped with radar amplifiers, roughly the equivalent of "testing" a bloodhound by strapping a beefsteak onto the quarry's leg. Then it announced that DIVAD's ineffectiveness would be cured by adding $1 billion-worth of Stinger antiaircraft missiles to the gun: in other words, the antiaircraft weapon would carry an antiaircraft weapon to protect it from aircraft. These two developments caused DIVAD, which until recently had lived the charmed life of the constituent spending program, to become a subject of ridicule in Congress, and after that to become a media event. Finally Weinberger was forced to act.

Usually weapons systems waft through Congress because they are difficult for the uninitiated to understand, difficult for the press to cover in single paragraphs, and difficult even for the open-minded to assess. We hold our breath and hope that the generals know something we don't. If it takes a total breakdown of every aspect of a weapons program to get action, what does that say about the rest of military spending, where choices are not so black-and-white? If Congress lacks the nerve to kill spending programs until problems reach the point of general ridicule, how can it be trusted to make public-spirited decisions on programs outside the public eye? If the secretary of defense won't be honest with himself until he stands in danger of being seen as a buffoon—if money is being thrown indiscriminately at weapons whether they work or not—what legitimacy does the Reagan defense buildup have? And if the president is too timid about offending the Pentagon brass to tell them to clean up their act when it comes to obvious problems in peacetime, how will he command them in time of crisis? Will we *learn anything* from DIVAD?

These are essential questions in the wake of DIVAD's semi-demise. After Cheyenne was killed in 1969, it merely was replaced by a new project designed to do the same thing at even higher costs—the AH64 Apache. Cheyenne's purpose was never questioned, nor was the institutional framework that had produced a multibillion dollar weapon that didn't work. Heads did not roll. More money was given to the same people to spend in the same way, with no new accountability imposed, and Congress went right back to sleep. Only the acronym changed. DIVAD can be different. It can be the source of lessons that show the way to greater national strength at a lower cost.

Defending the Defender

First, a look at the details. This will take a moment, but a grasp of the technical reasons behind DIVAD's failure makes the magnitude of the political disaster more evident.

No one disputes the Army's need for a new antiaircraft weapon. Its present antiaircraft gun, Vulcan, is outdated. Its large missiles (SAMs, or surface-to-air missiles), such as the Hawk, are effective, but too elaborate to move around during combat and thus useful only for protecting rear-area installations, not tanks and troops. Miniature SAMs, such as Stinger, which can be fired off a man's shoulder like a bazooka, are carried easily to the front but are not as effective as large missiles.

Stinger has been much in the news lately because of the upheaval caused by its sale to Saudi Arabia. What exactly Stinger does was skipped over for the most part during the debate, politicians and reporters alike taking for granted that because it is modern and expensive, it must be an awesome instrument of destruction. A heat-seeking missile similar to the highly effective Sidewinder, Stinger is sound in concept but has a severe practical limitation—in order to be light enough for a soldier to lift, Stinger contains hardly any fuel or explosives. The small fuel supply limits Stinger's range to about four miles under ideal conditions and less under combat conditions, because if an enemy aircraft makes a sharp turn to "duck" a Stinger, the missile will rapidly use up its fuel trying to follow. Such sharp evasive maneuvers are a standard tactic of ground attack aircraft. Stinger's warhead weighs only 2.5 pounds, about the size of a hand grenade, meaning that even a hit is no guarantee of destroying the target. None of these are flaws or defects, but simply the engineering limits of a toy-sized machine. Advocates of high-technology weaponry like to point out that the Soviet SA7,

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a miniature SAM, hit 30 Israeli planes during the 1973 Middle East war. They don't like to add that only two of the planes went down.

Stinger (like all SAMs) is of limited value also to field commanders since it cannot be used against ground targets, notably tanks. Because high-performance aircraft are the most glamorous and sophisticated threat facing U.S. divisions, it is assumed that they are the most serious threat, but this is not so. "At the front lines, for every one time you fire at the sky you fire 50 times at ground targets," says a former high Defense Department official. "Tanks, artillery, infantry, and ground guns are far more likely to kill you than aircraft."

DIVAD (short for "division air defense"), conceived during the mid-1970s, was supposed to correct all these deficiencies—providing an antiaircraft weapon that could go wherever tanks go and participate in ground fighting when not firing at the sky. Ideally it would be as fearsome as the German 88, which was one of the most successful weapons of World War II because it was equally effective against aircraft or tanks.

The hundreds of aircraft shot down by German 88s and similar guns were flying approximately the same speeds and maneuver patterns as attack aircraft fly today. While the maximum speed and G-forces airplanes can achieve has increased substantially since World War II, high speeds cannot be used at tree-top level. Even the most "capable" supersonic fighter must drop to subsonic speeds of no more than 450 knots for a ground attack run. All the aircraft shot down during World War II were hit by guns aimed visually, without electronics. Ninety-one percent of the modern U.S. jets lost over North Vietnam were shot down by visually aimed guns, many of them World War II leftovers. From the ground gunner's standpoint, modern aircraft are not much different from what they were 40 years ago.

Despite this, the Army insisted that DIVAD be an ultra-technology weapon that would find targets with radar and aim itself using a fully automated computer system. Soldiers would be required to do little more than switch DIVAD on and pull the trigger—when the computer instructed them to. This decision meant that *even if DIVAD worked*, it would be so expensive only a small number could be purchased; the added protection available to U.S. troops would be small.

The Army has tried to build DIVAD several times before. Following World War II it tried to win funds for a 75mm radar gun called Skysweeper, which was aimed by analog computers and did poorly in tests. During the 1960s it experimented with a radar-computer 37mm weapon called Vigilante. Vigilante was canceled after tests showed it could not hit a maneuvering aircraft—the system could hit aircraft only if they flew straight lines. An internal Army evaluation of Vigilante, declassified last year, concluded that radar-computer directed antiaircraft fire was a technological impossibility and recommended that the Army instead build a large number of simple visually aided cannons. But rather than learning the lesson of its own attempts, the Army's antiaircraft hierarchy became even more firmly dedicated to the idea of getting an "all singing, all dancing" weapon, as one former Pentagon official described the goal, to restore the prestige lost by the failures of Skysweeper and Vigilante.

It it takes a total breakdown of every aspect of a weapons program to get action, what does that say about the rest of military spending, where choices are not so black and white?

In the early 1970s the West German military won money for a self-propelled radar-computer gun with the ominous name, Gepard Flakpanzer. The Flakpanzer eventually turned out to cost $5 million and be ineffective. Nonetheless the Army was envious. Then, during the 1973 war, Israeli troops captured a much-rumored Russian super gun, the ZSU23/4 Shilka. Shilka was everything Vigilante would have been—radars, computers, automation!!! Taken to MacGregor gunnery range near Fort Bliss, Texas, Shilka was evaluated during a series of tests code-named HITVAL. The "super weapon" proved so unreliable that engineers could barely keep it running for the tests to proceed; hours or days often

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separated firings. More importantly, Shilka was unable to hit maneuvering targets, only drones flying straight, predictable lines.

Even so, the Army's envy grew worse. The Threat had something we didn't have! All too often procurement decisions are driven by hyperbolic assessments of Soviet equipment, and so it was with the Shilka. Never mind that it didn't work; just knowing that The Threat's procurement bureaucracy had talked its politicians into coming across with funds where our boys had been refused was insult enough. Shortly after HITVAL was completed, the Army composed a "requirement" for DIVAD.

Hitting a maneuvering target with an automated system hasn't worked for Shilka or DIVAD because it cannot be done. Once again this is not a flaw or defect, but a limitation of technology. Sometimes military projects stand or fall not on questions of detail but on fundamental principles of physics, and this was such a case. While radar can tell with high precision where an airplane is, it cannot tell where the airplane is *going*—which is the vital part of aiming at a moving target. Computers, however powerful and fast, cannot compensate. "Humans," as the Pentagon now often calls them, actually have more information at their disposal than computers when aiming a gun visually. Computers see targets as featureless blips; a gunner sees what type of aircraft he is aiming at, sees what position its nose and flaps are in (indicating which way it is about to turn), knows what type of tactics the enemy generally flies, and can use his intuition.

"Of course DIVAD will miss if the target jinks [maneuvers]," Lt. General James Maloney, head of the program, told me two years ago. "No computer can handle a jinking target." There is no shame in failing to do that which cannot be done. But all organizations have difficulty admitting to themselves what they cannot do, and most of all the modern Pentagon, which has staked its prestige on the notion that high technology is omnipotent. So DIVAD went ahead even though its planners knew from the start that the weapon would be useless against maneuvering attack planes, the most serious aerial threat to troops.

The attack plane problem was assumed away; the Army, one of General Maloney's aides told me, had determined that Russian aircraft would not use evasive maneuvers (let's hope the Kremlin has been informed) and that shooting helicopters would become DIVAD's primary assignment. This assuming away of reality has caught on to an astonishing degree. In congressional testimony Army officials say with a shrug that DIVAD's inability to handle jinking targets is not an issue because everybody knows DIVAD can't handle jinking targets, recalling the California gubernatorial candidate who, when ties to the mob were revealed, responded by declaring, "I never said I was tough on crime." Most press accounts have also skimmed past DIVAD's uselessness against maneuvering planes. So, freely admitted, the weapon's most basic defect has in a weird way become noncontroversial.

Cooperative targets

By 1980 two competing DIVAD prototypes had been built, one by the Ford Aerospace division of Ford Motors and one by General Dynamics. A "shootoff," officially called DT/OT, was held to judge the winner. Neither gun did particularly well considering their expense and the fact that they were not tested against maneuvering targets—only drones flying lazy, straight lines were employed. The guns were shooting, in the words of a retired Air Force fighter pilot, against "extremely cooperative targets."

Though neither prototype did well, Ford's was least effective, recording only nine hits to 19 for the General Dynamics contender. Ford's longest-range hit was less than half as long as General Dynamics', and the Ford prototype *never* managed to hit an aircraft drone, even one on a sitting-duck flight path. It could hit only helicopters, the easier target.

You've guessed by now that Ford won the contract. On Ford's team were four recently retired three-star Army generals, all from the procurement and air defense branches. Every contractor hires retired procurement officers to smooth its path, but four recent three-stars is high even by Pentagon standards. In addition, as soon as it won the contract, Ford hired the colonel who supervised the DT/OT II test, who coincidentally chose that moment to retire.

One factor that worked, oddly, in Ford's favor, was that just before the initial contracts, during the recession of spring 1981, Ford declared the largest corporate loss in U.S. history. In the White House there was fear that Ford would declare bankruptcy or demand a Chrysler-style bailout. In the Pentagon officials were inclined to throw Ford some business on the "industrial base" argument—championed by Undersecretary Richard DeLauer—that production lines must be kept open. In 1981 Ford had little defense business while General Dynamics had plenty. So

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Ford was chosen.

"Industrial base" preservation has merit. The defense industry is already too concentrated, and letting a major contractor drop out would only decrease competition further. But throwing a company some business only results in national gain when what is acquired works.

Lunenbergs running the asylum

Chosen as the DIVAD "source" in 1981, Ford was not yet out of the woods. Army inspectors found so many deficiencies in its prototype that a production award was put off until the next year. Fortune smiled on Ford in September 1981, when James Ambrose was named undersecretary of the Army: his last job had been vice president of Ford Aerospace, where he oversaw development of DIVAD. In May 1982, with Ambrose the highest-ranking Army official present, a review board approved DIVAD production.

The first DIVADs came off the line six months late and in such shoddy condition that the Army had to waive its contract requirement in order to accept them. During a test one DIVAD locked on to a latrine fan. Michael Duffy, a reporter for the industry publication *Defense Week*, who broke this aspect of the story, received a conference call in which Ford officials asked him to describe the target as a "building fan" or "exhaust fan" instead.

In February 1984 the Army formally notified Ford that its performance had been "totally unacceptable," and activated a rarely used contract clause to suspend DIVAD production. In June Weinberger dressed down some generals at DARCOM (the Army procurement hierarchy) who had come to give him a briefing about how DIVAD was just dandy, and told them to show cause for the project not to be canceled. The Army responded by staging another rigged test.

Held at Fort Bliss in July, the "Limited Operational Test" was confined to shooting at a helicopter drone equipped with radar amplifiers. The amplifiers ("Lunenberg lenses") refocus radar beams to make them easier for the sending unit to detect. At first the drone was fitted with only one Lunenberg lens, but that wasn't enough; DIVAD couldn't find it. Eventually four were added, on the compass points below the mast. With four amplifiers DIVAD finally scored a hit, and the tests were pronounced a success. (Needless to say, not only was the target cooperating but it was not maneuvering, there were no radar jammers operating, and there were no other aircraft in the area as distractions. To continue the previous analogy, this one was like testing a bloodhound's ability to track a man covered with beefsteaks standing alone and upright in the middle of a parking lot.)

Exact results of the LOT test are classified, but a Pentagon radar expert who has studied them told me, "The test was a total fraud. It bore no relationship whatsoever to any condition the DIVAD would encounter in wartime." Army officers claim amplifiers were used to "enhance" the reflection because Russian attack helicopters are larger than the Huey-size drone; the Pentagon radar expert said the amount of amplification was many times more than required for this purpose.

DIVAD's radar, which is adopted from the F16 fighter, needs help from amplifiers because it was found to possess a farcical drawback—it can track moving targets but not stationary ones, the greatest sitting ducks of all.

Again this is not a manufacturing defect but a boundary of technology. For reasons too complicated to explain here, an object must be moving if the DIVAD's radar, which operates on the Doppler principle, is to locate it (as a train must be moving for the pitch of its whistle to change). What it boiled down to is that DIVAD's radar could track maneuvering airplanes, but its computer could not aim at them. Meanwhile DIVAD's computer could handle hovering helicopters, but these its radar could not track.

Nonconcurrent resolution

Building a $6.8 million radar-computer system to shoot at helicopters is an especially dramatic example of the contemporary Pentagon's insistence that every objective be accomplished in the most complex and expensive manner possible. Almost anyone can aim at a hovering helicopter, and almost any kind of gun will bring a helicopter down. During the Vietnam war the Army—flying with total air superiority—lost 4,643 helicopters, or nearly three times the number of jet fighters lost in Korea. All these helicopters were destroyed by visually aimed fire from small arms; no radars or fancy SAM missiles were employed. In Vietnam the Russian AK47 assault rifle, which costs about $600, proved to be an effective antihelicopter weapon.

Responding to criticism of LOT, the Army said it would stage a realistic test of DIVAD sometime in 1985. Why couldn't realistic tests be staged until nearly a year after the secretary of defense ordered them? Because, the Army said, it will take

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that long to train an operating crew—for this, the completely automated system.

This fall Weinberger was briefed on the results of the LOT test by Brig. Gen. Michael Hall, an Air Force officer who is acting head of the Pentagon's Operational Test Evaluation office. OTE had written what is believed to be a scathing critique of DIVAD. Simultaneously the Defense inspector general was finishing his report, which accused Ford of overbilling the Army by $84 million.

The report found what is fast becoming the customary spare-parts pricing schedule—a power control assembly jumping from $7,805 on the first quote to $151,500 on the third, for example.

Also it was found that in many cases, Ford had given the Army an estimated price for subcontracted components, then obtained the components for significantly less, pocketing the difference. According to the inspector general, Ford actually paid the Swedish firm Bofors, which makes DIVAD's cannon, $16 million less than it told the Army in bid documents the cannon would cost. DARCOM had been warned during contract negotiations that DIVAD subcontracts could be obtained for less than Ford was predicting but chose to ignore the warnings. Ford, however, did not ignore them. It used the very same government "field pricing" reports that DARCOM dismissed as an instrument with which to bargain the subcontractors down. Responding to the inspector general's charges, Assistant Secretary of the Army Jay Sculley wrote, "The Army nonconcurs."

The key piece of information here is that DARCOM, which is supposed to ride herd over contractors, was disguising and apologizing for excess prices. Within institutional Washington, "clientism"—becoming an advocate for the interests one is charged with controlling—is common. Ambassadors often try to cover up what's really going on in their client countries; cabinet secretaries come to their jobs threatening to wield the budget ax and six months later are up on Capitol Hill asking for dramatic budget increases. In military procurement agencies like DARCOM, generals measure their status by how much money they spend—putting them on the side of cost inflators. And as most envision a lucrative second career with a defense contractor, they know that the less disciplined the programs, the more money will be available to provide them handsome salaries and expense accounts when they retire.

It was at this low point—word of critical audit reports and the latest magic tests beginning to circulate—that the Army chose to announce its plans to add the Stinger to DIVAD. Just how these missiles were to be incorporated into a system already so complex that Ford technicians were having trouble keeping it running, the Army didn't explain. (In addition to never shooting at maneuvering targets, DIVAD had never been subjected to a field reliability test. That was expected to be the next embarrassment.) There was another consideration: Stinger was in trouble too.

The General Accounting Office was preparing to release a report saying purchases of the miniature missile should be cut because of cost (at $88,000 each, Stingers cost more than Sidewinders) and technical limits on its performance. Adding Stinger to DIVAD, the Army felt, would tie the fates of two troubled programs together, making each more difficult to defeat.

Additionally, Stinger is built by General Dynamics, the nation's largest and best-connected defense contractor. It was General Dynamics from which the original DIVAD contract was stolen in 1981, and the company had been smarting ever since. General Dynamics is said by some Pentagon sources to have a "Pearl Harbor file" of details still unreleased on how the DIVAD selection was rigged, and to have alluded to that file at opportune moments. A billion in extra business might soothe its feelings; "Stinger was added to buy G.D.'s silence," an informed Pentagon official told me.

(Further public relations improvements were sought by a concerted effort on the Army's part to call DIVAD by its formal name, the Sergeant York Gun, making it sound like something new. At a low point for the M1 the Army rallied by suddenly beginning to speak not of the M1 but of the Abrams tank; Reagan tried, with less success, to rid himself of the MX by proclaiming it the Peacekeeper. The B1 has not yet been named, so watch for that day—probably the day before a cost overrun is revealed—that the Air Force begins talking of the LeMay bomber.)

The Stinger gambit worked in reverse, making DIVAD's plight so obvious that Congress had to act. After a House committee voted to "fence" all DIVAD funds until completion of the scheduled realistic tests next year, and the Senate voted to deny fiscal 1985 production funds, Weinberger finally gave in, agreeing not to resume production and to await further results. While there could be some attempt next year to revive DIVAD, a quiet death is now expected. It's important to note that even in this environment, with DIVAD becoming a laughing stock that

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would undermine all Pentagon budget requests, the secretary of defense still could not bring himself simply to be a man and cancel the program.

The Good, the Badham, and the Ugly

Congress had done its best to overlook DIVAD previously: In June 1983 Rep. Larry Smith of Florida introduced an amendment to kill the program. Five congressmen rose on the House floor to speak for continuation: Samuel Stratton of New York, Robert Badham of California, Marjorie Holt of Maryland, Bill Nichols of Alabama, and Ronald Coleman of Texas. Stratton is chairman of the procurement subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, and he spoke briefly to object to intrusion on his turf. The other four spoke at length, although without giving any indication of the reasons for their interest in the program.

Badham, also on the Armed Services Committee, represents the district where DIVAD is assembled. Holt, another Armed Services committee member, is from the suburbs of Baltimore, home of the Westinghouse division that builds DIVAD's radar. Nichols, of Armed Services, represents Anniston, Alabama, site of the factory where DIVAD's chassis are made. Coleman is from El Paso, location of Fort Bliss, where DIVADs would be based. No congressmen without a personal stake in keeping the funds flowing spoke in DIVAD's defense.

Badham declared that DIVAD "is on schedule, under cost and has no significant performance problems." Coleman found an innovative use for The Threat, saying we shouldn't worry that DIVAD's radar will act as a beacon revealing the location of U.S. troops (while DIVAD may not be able to hit aircraft, aircraft with radar-seeking missiles will have little trouble hitting DIVAD) because the Russians don't worry about Shilka's

What to build instead

Despite America's difficulties in building a new air-defense system, there are a wide variety of Western-built antiaircraft weapons that could do a bettter job than DIVAD at a fraction of the price, and be put into service rapidly. One comes from a maverick faction within the Army itself.

Before the last Army chief of staff, General E.C. Meyer, retired, he created a back-channel weapons development bureau called ADEA and aligned it with the 9th Infantry at Fort Lewis, Washington, one of Meyer's new "light" divisions and one known for independent thinking. ADEA and the 9th were exempted from normal procedural rules and especially from subservience to the paper generals at DARCOM. As Vernon Guidry Jr. reported in the Baltimore *Sun*, this new team has already developed and tested half a dozen new weapons solely by their wits, with almost no money spent.

The 9th Infantry's favorite project is an antiaircraft system with the zoomy name, Avenger. It employs Stinger missiles in a simple turret carried on the back of the Hummer, a utility vehicle replacing the Jeep. Operated by one soldier, the turret has infrared sighting aids that make the Stingers more accurate than when shoulder-launched.

Avenger went from a light bulb in the 9th Infantry's head to a working prototype in eight months. Boeing Aerospace did the technical phase of the project, at its own expense, for just $2.5 million. (Spending your own money has a way of clearing the mind.) In a glorious gesture of bravado, the first firing was conducted with Avenger's moving 20 miles an hour down a dirt road; it was a hit. DIVAD, which is supposed to be able to keep pace with tanks, is usually tested sitting still on a concrete pad, with telemetry probes attached.

Avengers should cost about $1 million each. If mounted Stingers are what the Army wants, there is a much cheaper way to get them than using DIVAD as history's most expensive truck. However, there are still cheaper and more effective alternatives. NATO armies have several light antiaircraft vehicles that could be procured or licensed for production here. All would be much cheaper than DIVAD and much more effective. The Swiss firm Oerlikon makes a towed antiaircraft cannon with cheap and reliable laser aiming aids for $500,000. And here at home, General Dynamics has plans for an antiaircraft vehicle that would be visually aimed and cost one-fourth as much as DIVAD.

–G.E.

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radars giving them away.

Smith's amendment lost by a large margin, and a similar amendment he offered in May 1984 lost as well, with a similar cast of characters rising to speak without revealing their personal interests. Opposition to DIVAD was then taken over by Rep. Denny Smith (no relation) of Oregon, a conservative Republican and former fighter pilot who flew 180 combat missions during Vietnam. He has said that what pilots fear is a large number of guns setting up a crossfire, not a single gun, no matter how good. On the Senate side one of the most outspoken DIVAD opponents was John Glenn of Ohio—also a former fighter pilot.

Unfortunately some DIVAD critics fall into the trap of saying everything that reflects poorly on the weapon without regard for whether the objections are significant or internally consistent. For example, the Congressional Budget Office criticized DIVAD because its guns have a maximum range of four kilometers, while new Soviet helicopter-launched missiles are thought to have a maximum range of ten kilometers. But this range is strictly theoretical. In actual use Soviet helicopters will have to draw much closer to U.S. tanks just to locate them, let alone to target missiles. Basing procurement decisions on what weapons do in theory is like my saying it will take me an hour to get from Washington to Philadelphia because my car has a top speed of 120 miles per hour. I could get into serious trouble if I confused what my car is capable of doing with how I use it under real-world conditions: the same kind of trouble is now afflicting the Pentagon.

The exaggerated ten-kilometer objection gained just enough currency to backfire. When the Army announced its Stinger-DIVAD merger plan, the official explanation was that this would counter the new long-range helicopter threat. As alternatives to DIVAD begin to be discussed in the armed services committees next year, the range argument may well be used to justify some other very complex, expensive system.

Quality is job number 378

Of course, congressmen are loath to attack each other's boondoggles for fear that their own boondoggles will be attacked in turn. Ford, the Army, and Weinberger all had institutional dilemmas of their own.

DIVAD's condition is not entirely Ford's fault, since the company was sent on a technological snipe hunt. Public scorn for DIVAD tarnishes the company's otherwise admirable image—besides its rapidly improving cars, Ford builds the Sidewinder missile, perhaps the most cost-effective weapon in the modern arsenal. To top it off, even if Ford keeps the $84 million, it may end up losing money on the deal, as the costs of building a radar-computer system turned out so much higher than predicted. But the company had no way to escape gracefully. If Ford withdrew from the project it would be admitting to shareholders that company investments in DIVAD tooling were a waste, and the Pentagon would be incensed. A Ford withdrawal would be tantamount to a formal admission that the project was a flop, and Ford's prospects for future defense work would plummet.

Weapons programs like DIVAD, which lurch forward foot by foot, refusing to go away, generally overwhelm the Washington establishment by boring it to death.

The Army could not drop DIVAD, either, without admitting it was wrong in the first place. Chief of Staff General John Wickham has lately been reduced to pleading that "we're stuck with it," that stopping now will mean the $1.5 billion already spent will have been wasted. True enough, but the $1.5 billion spent is already wasted no matter what we do next; pouring several billion more down the same drain will not cause the original $1.5 billion to float back up. (Though a sure sign of desperation, the "we're stuck with it" argument is among the most persuasive to Congress.) Wickham will be chief of staff for a few years at most, then retire. If he blunders along denying that there are problems, his tenure will will not have an official mark against it—and the effect of his actions, fielding a weapon that's no good, will not be felt until someone else is on the hot seat.

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Not all the military's problems are of its own making. Congress likes to hear about wonder weapons that can do everything everywhere automatically. The political sex appeal quotient of the best alternative to DIVAD—visually aimed simple guns—is roughly zero. DIVAD was also designed in the environment of the mid-1970s, when enlistment and the "quality" of troops were down. Congress expected Army planners to operate with as few people as possible and to build idiot-proof weapons that required little skill; "putting the brains into the machine" became the slogan, and it accounts for much of what is emerging today, a decade later, in great-sounding but ineffective weaponry. Finally, both the Pentagon and Congress have a fondness for wonder weapons because they offer the hope of fewer deaths on our side. One perfect DIVAD with three soldiers reasonably safe inside an armored shell might accomplish the work of five scattered gun crews less well protected. This motive is a noble one, and well worth any expense. But to serve the ideal the wonder weapons must work: if they don't the death toll may ultimately be greater.

The symbolism of spending rules Washington debate. Conservatives, who so often opine that the welfare system cannot be trusted because it is run by self-interested bureaucrats and that in welfare throwing money at a problem can actually do more harm than good, turn around and say that when it comes to the Pentagon the experts must not be questioned; throwing money is the only solution. They tend to see money itself as a form of defense and the details of how that money is used as a nagging side issue. Would giving Chrysler a bigger budget—without requiring it to improve its cars—have saved the company? Many leftists, for their part, tend to fall for the theoretical performance claims of high-technology weaponry because the idea that those menacing multinational conglomerates can't build a machine that hits a stationary target does not fit with their preferred world view. Both sides try to avoid the low-glamour, non-geopolitical question of whether the weapons work. The result is that, in order to stave off an admission of error that would be awkward today but improve matters over the long run, the Pentagon ends up looking foolish day in and day out.

The pack pounces

I have a personal interest in this subject, having done the first DIVAD story more than two years ago in *The Atlantic*. For a while it was my word versus the Army and Ford, and my word wasn't doing too well. DIVAD was all but unknown then, most of my facts came from off-the-record sources and all were being vigorously denied. The networks and the big papers wouldn't touch the story.

Fortunately for me, the Project on Military Procurement took up the cause. The Project is a sort of clearinghouse for whistleblowers. After my story was done, one of my sources, a man with lifelong Pentagon connections who later lost his job because he helped me, delivered copies of some DIVAD documents to the Project. Paul Hoven, a former Vietnam helicopter pilot who is assistant to Dina Rasor, the Project director, then began a tireless effort to get other reporters to write about DIVAD. The Project's involvement allowed reports to be hooked to a semi-official source. Should something go wrong, a paper could quickly wash its hands of the DIVAD story by saying it was merely reporting the allegations of a nonprofit foundation.

As public admission of DIVAD's problems began to occur this year, the frequency of stories increased. DIVAD became a media star, even though the substance of what was being reported had been known for two years. (At one point in September 1984 *The New York Times* ran as a front-page story something we'd had in the *Atlantic* in October 1982. But am I bitter? No-o-o-o.) Partly this delayed response owes to the structure of Washington life. Government affairs produce such an information overload that, even considering the number of reporters per square inch in Washington, time often passes between when news reaches print and when it sinks in. Billygate broke nearly a year after the substance of the case—that a president's brother had registered as a paid agent of a hostile power—had been published without reaction. David Stockman mentioned Reagan's possession of the Carter briefing book during his Elkhart, Indiana speech two years before Debategate; the mining of Nicaraguan harbors was reported roughly four months before it became a national headline issue.

But DIVAD suddenly hit the news for another reason—it had become official. There was no risk in reporting the official release of an Army contract ruling or an official statement made by Weinberger at a press conference. Nor any need for the reporter to make judgments on his own authority—as, inevitably, reporters must when evaluating contradictory claims that cannot be definitely proven. (Even reporters using the pure-

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Learning from Afghanistan

The desire to anchor stories on "official" ground often keeps reporters from drawing the connections between seemingly unrelated events—an essential component to making sense of the world. An important connection for the DIVAD project is that the very Soviet aircraft DIVAD is supposed to destroy are presently being shredded up in Afghanistan by weapons that cost about $100,000.

Many Hind D/E series attack helicopters—the most advanced Soviet helicopter—have been shot down by Afghan rebels using rifles, machine guns, small bazooka-like rockets, and a cheap, simple antiaircraft cannon called the Z23. The Z23 is Russian-made; U.S. agents have been buying them from Middle Eastern countries and funneling them to the rebels via Pakistan. Towed by jeeps, Z23s use strictly "ring and bead" visual sights dating to World War II—no electronics whatsoever. These guns have also shot down several Sukhoi 25s, the new Soviet ground attack plane, which can fly sharp evasive maneuvers.

These Soviet aircraft have been shot down under *conditions most favorable to the target:* total Soviet air superiority, vast Soviet advantages in firepower and technology. Back at Fort Bliss the Army cannot make DIVAD work under conditions most favorable to the gun, and seems determined to ignore real-world experience with real bullets shooting down what it claims can't be destroyed without $8 million-worth of technology.

It was also the Z23 in Cuban hands that brought down nine of the 107 helicopters we took to Grenada in just three days of fighting under conditions granting the helicopters similar overwhelming advantages. (Cuban troops had no radar, no missiles, and no electronics.) At that attrition rate, the entire U.S. helicopter force would have been gone by the end of a month. The helicopters lost were mainly Cobras, which are much smaller and more nimble than the Soviet Hinds and thus harder to hit, and the new Blackhawk, the Army's most advanced helicopter in service at the time of the operation.

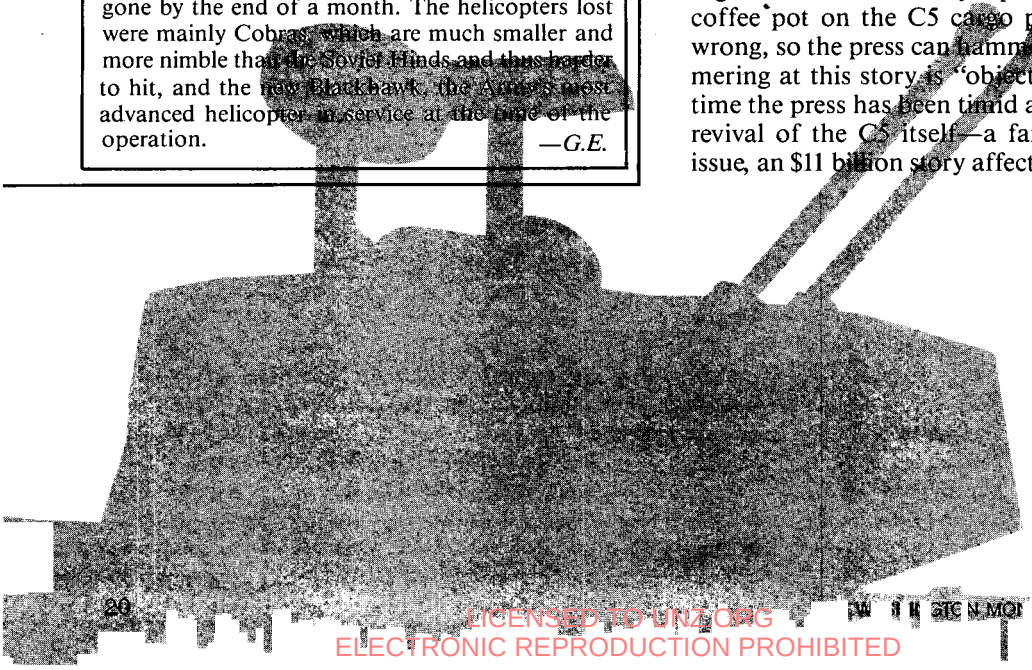
—*G.E.*

objective "'he said she said" form must make *some* judgments about who's closer to the truth or their stories will be incomprehensible.)

Everything worked out in the sense that DIVAD's problems did become public. But what if they hadn't? What if the Army had kept on denying? And how many billions could have been saved if the general press had been willing to tackle this story earlier, before mistakes were cast in stone?

The press is thought of as "biased." Where does bias occur? Generally, in loading value judgments into accounts of *official* events—presidential statements, economic indicators, results of summit conferences, and so on. When the picture is less clear, most reporters and news organizations are fearful of making judgments on their own authority; stories must always hinge on an indisputable fact or a "study has found." In one sense this is "just the facts, ma'am," but in another and equally important sense it absolves the press from having to do its own thinking and take stands for which it might later be criticized. The press *should* take stands when mistakes are going uncorrected or wrongs unrighted; this is especially important in military procurement, considering that the press is the only major actor without a self-interest stake in unlimited budget increases.

If reporters are smart enough to say what is wrong—as nearly every newspaper and television station does on a daily basis—they are smart enough to suggest what would be right. Yet as proper coverage of complex issues like defense inevitably entails evaluative risks, most news organizations back away. Spending $7,600 for a coffee pot on the C5 cargo plane is obviously wrong, so the press can hammer away at it; hammering at this story is "objective." At the same time the press has been timid about covering the revival of the C5 itself—a far more important issue, an $11 billion story affecting the deficit, the



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way the Pentagon does business, and whether the Air Force can get a vital job done.

Most of the weapons horror stories that have made the news in recent years have come either from low-visibility papers like *The Arizona Daily Star*, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, or the *Washington Times*, or from the Pentagon itself: release of official audit reports is frequently treated in news stories as breathtaking revelations the reporter dug up. If it weren't for Pentagon auditors most of the spare-parts stories would not have broken, a point Defense Department spokesmen have tried to make with increasing frustration. The Project on Military Procurement has been the source of some other spare parts news (like the $7,600 coffee pot) and many of the troubled weapons stories that have appeared in major papers in recent years. This is both a tribute to the Project and an indictment of big-deal news organizations that are either unable or unwilling to do the real work on their own. NBC News's recent segments on fraud in shipyard contracts were excellent, but the story was done in conjunction with the Better Government Association, another organization that, like the Project, does low-glamour work and learns enough to trust its own judgment. When the big-deal press does get Pentagon stories on its own, the stories are often approached with a trepidation Hildy Johnson would find unbelievable. For example, Charles Mohr's important *New York Times* story on unrealistic testing of the Assault Breaker system, a potential multibillion-dollar program that is today where DIVAD was five years ago in terms of building bureaucratic momentum, was buried on page A21.

In a strange way, the national press corps actually prefers to focus on stories everybody has, which seems to me the reverse of what reporters are supposed to do. Press conferences; plane crashes; confirmation hearings; the campaign trail; ABC gets the senator's statement 17 seconds before CBS. When the marines were killed in Beirut every newspaper and television station in America wanted to shove a microphone into General Kelley's face and demand a statement—but where were they when the institutional problems that *caused* the fiasco were developing? Between the barracks bombing in 1983 and the embassy bombing in 1984, where was the reporting on whether changes were being made to prevent the fiasco from being repeated?

Of course, newspapers and television stations must devote the bulk of their attention to the breaking events of the day and treat risky-enterprise reporting as their second concern. And of course, covering breaking events can be difficult and sometimes dangerous work. But most of the time it isn't—most of the time it's a breeze. In the upside-down world of the national press the best reporters are often given the least challenging assignments, such as press conferences. Amazing amounts of attention are paid to stories everybody has (like Ferraro's finances), while stories only one paper or network has—which may be the biggest *news*—are played down. And though no news organization can be everywhere, it's not lack of resources that prevents them from taking on the Pentagon. Anyone who has recently walked through newsrooms of the major networks, newsmagazines or the top five papers knows they are not exactly understaffed.

Yet the Department of Defense, with three million employees the free world's largest single institution and for several reasons one of the most important stories of the 1980s, gets less press attention than the Iowa caucuses. And matters may get worse. When the postmortems on the CBS-Westmoreland case are written, CBS's ultimate sin may well be judged to have been reaching its own conclusion. Perhaps CBS was wrong in accusing Westmoreland of "conspiracy"; but instead of seeing this event as a sign that journalists working in complicated subject areas should redouble their efforts to insure their conclusions are correct, most of the big-deal press will probably interpret it as a sign that journalists shouldn't take chances. Would CBS have been assailed if it had merely quoted "experts" alleging conspiracy?

Sure to be fixed in 14 years

Lately Army officials have begun to say that DIVAD got screwed up because it was an "accelerated development" program given only seven years from proposal to production, instead of "the normal 14." Rep. Coleman dutifully echoed this claim on the House floor.

How much further removed from reality can an argument be? The Apple computer and the IBM PC; the Honda Accord and the Pontiac Fiero; the Boeing 747 and the nuclear magnetic resonance medical scanner; none of these, complex technology built to real world requirements, took 14 years. The *space shuttle* took less time; the highly successful F16 fighter was put together in two years by a bunch of guys at General Dynamics who had their own private hangar and a temporary exemption from Air Force R&D regulations. Recently Ford suspended production

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of its Tempo and Topaz models because a manufacturing defect was discovered. Nobody had to tell Ford the situation was "totally unacceptable"; the company acted on its own, because the cars were on their way to the real world where realistic testers (customers) would quickly find and complain about the problems. In DIVAD's case the customer has done its best to cover up rather than correct the problems.

The notion that it takes 14 years to determine if a mechanical device works is ideally suited to institutional Washington. Washington has an attention span of about one week. Each week some issue pops up to become the most important question in the history of civilization, and each following week the issue is forgotten and the world created anew. Remember the week in 1983 when every headline was the shocking, astounding events in Chad? The week this fall when minesweepers being sent to the Persian Gulf dominated the news, only to vanish as surely as though they had sunk? Washington institutions, including the press corps, are oriented toward crisis-management issues that explode from nowhere, build rapidly, and then peak with some distinct conclusion. Weapons programs like DIVAD which lurch forward foot by foot, refusing to go away, generally overcome the system by boring it to death.

And it's obvious where the 14-years-complaint is leading. The Army will use DIVAD's failure as an argument for *more* wasted time, more spending, more insulation from reality. After the 1981 "shootoff" provided the first bad news about DIVAD, DARCOM commissioned a study of weapons selection techniques. The study recommended that actual tests like the shootoff be foresaken: it would be more efficient, the study said, to "test" strictly by computer simulation.

My last defense story

But even though these stories are important, you're sick of reading them. I don't blame you; I'm sick of writing them. I feel I have recently fulfilled my civic and journalistic obligations in regards to national defense, and promise not to write on the military again. So there's a small consolation for your having to read 10,000 words about antiaircraft guns.

Allow me to close by first using up an anecdote I have been saving for years: a Pentagon official once told me, "I'm not authorized to say 'no comment.' You'll have to get your 'no comment' through channels."

One of the frustrations of doing stories like DIVAD is that the principals inevitably come off sounding like nitwits, which of course they are not. It's difficult to draw the distinction between what people do and what the system does: journalistic shorthand usually makes people sound like the guilty parties, when in fact it is the system which is guilty.

The military men and women I have met in five years of defense reporting generally have been bright, dedicated and diligent. Naturally the military has its share of scoundrels—they tend to collect at the top—but very few in the armed forces are corrupt in the money sense or dull in the mental sense. In an important way they are idealists, having offered to lay down their lives if so required. Some in the military don't take this offer seriously—but many more do. How many congressmen, reporters or experts would make a similar offer?

But put even the bravest and smartest soldiers into a committee, and they turn into the cast of *Saturday Night Live*. The system is the problem, not the personnel; the system is so slanted towards interest groups and ass-covering that bad drives out good. The solution is leadership from the president and the secretary of defense; not salesmanship for budget requests, but leadership. I feel strongly that if a president were to challenge the Pentagon to be *better* instead of bigger, more effective instead of more expensive, he would find a receptive audience both with the public—which, I think, senses how far out of control the Pentagon is—and within the military itself.

An important national reserve, pride, is being squandered by the present slapstick system. Real officers don't want to see their men slaughtered in Beirut because they were paying more attention to politics than tactics; don't want to be sent up to Congress to lie through their teeth; don't want to prostitute their honor defending pork barrel. Real officers want to get up in the morning and know they're doing their best and everything else be damned. Real soldiers feel the same way. Even military contractors would be happier and gain self-respect if what they were building was useful instead of wasteful.

But the present system does not reward true believers; it rewards game players. This can be changed, but not until we have a president and a secretary of defense who are interested in something beyond the easy way out. A president more interested in the country than the polls; who knows that strength is different from spending; who understands that patriotism is different from nodding yes. ■

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

Mellon Interoffice
Memorandum

Date: May 8, 1984
To: Portfolio & Funds Management

From: Facilities Planning

RE: NEW PLANT STANDARDS - INSTALLATION TIME

When: April 27, 1984

Where: OMBC-4

Liaison: Tammy Pryor

Corporate Plant Standards have been established for all office space in One Mellon Bank Center. Through the efforts of Real Estate Management and outside consultants, pleasing design standards have been created to compliment the new office spaces. These involve a variety of plant species and sizes placed in standardized containers according to installation drawings which follow the unique furniture layout of each floor. Plantscape, Inc. has been contracted to supply and maintain the plants according to these installation drawings.

Plantscape will provide a maintenace staff to make weekly service visits to your floor. At this time, the maintenace staff will attend to all needs of each plant, including watering, pruning, dusting, fertilizing, and rotating for proper light exposure.

Employees are asked not to water, feed, add foreign substances to the soil (i.e. cigarettes and coffee), or in any way alter or move plants supplied by Mellon. This type of action will void Mellon's contract with Plantscape, and will require payment by each bank department for any replacements made.

Each employee is permitted one personal plant to be located on the desk surface only, except at the reception area, where no personal plants are permitted. A flowering plant will be provided here.

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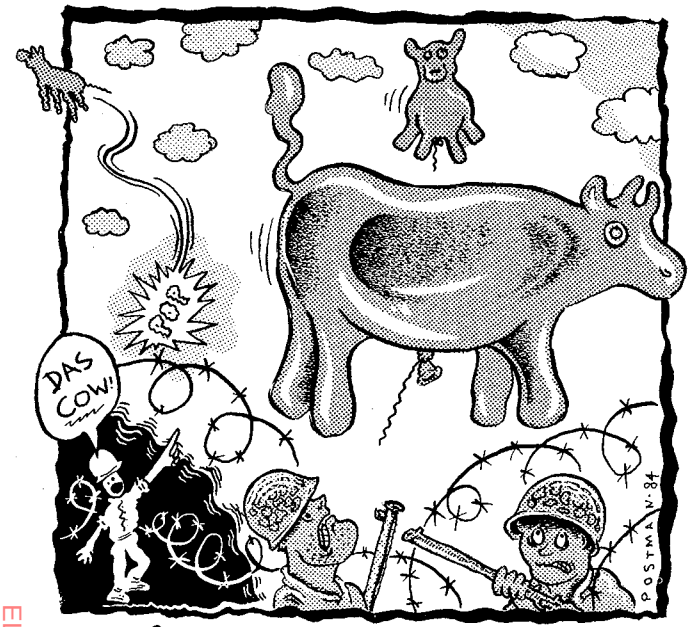
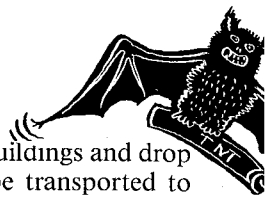


BOVINE BALLOONS AND THE ODIFEROUS OPTION

By James Clark



When Edward Teller and J. Robert Oppenheimer labored in Los Alamos to perfect the atomic bomb, they were not the only scientists who attempted to harness nature's mysteries in order to stop the Axis. Nor have their efforts proved to be the nation's best-guarded military secret. Forty years later, the human drama of the Manhattan Project is common knowledge. But how many people are aware of the simultaneous race to develop 52 other war-winning weapons that was carried out by the Office of Strategic Studies?

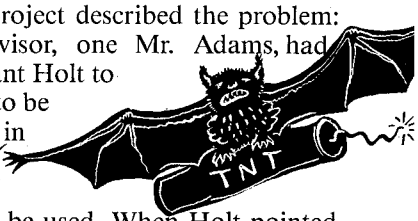
The detailed chronicles of many of these weapons are still classified top secret. But recently I happened upon some declassified references to them in the National Archives. Perhaps it would not hurt to mention that I am not making any of this up.

Consider Project Fantasia. The idea was to make balloons shaped like animals. The balloons would be filled with helium and floated at low altitudes over enemy lines. A German soldier would look up, see a flying cow, and scream out "Eine Kuh! Eine Kuh!." In the ensuing pandemonium, he and his fellow soldiers would throw down their rifles and flee the flying cow. Revisionist historians can laugh all they like, but they cannot assume that the floating cow idea is dead. The CIA solemnly proclaims that Project Fantasia is a top secret project and will not say whether it has ever floated any cows over enemy lines.

In 1943, the OSS came up with Project Bat. The idea was to attach small bombs to the wings of bats, which would fly into buildings and drop the bombs. The bats would be transported to Japan and let loose in Tokyo.

Figuring out how to attach the bombs to the bats and how to teach the bats to drop their bombs proved a little tricky, and the project appears to have faltered in late November 1943, when a scientist advisor to the OSS decided to test the bat-bombs.

In a declassified secret letter, one of the men working on the project described the problem: The scientist advisor, one Mr. Adams, had "ordered Lieutenant Holt to prepare for a test to be held on the desert in which 10,000 assemblies [i.e., bats] were to be used. When Holt pointed out the tremendous hazard the program posed for Southern California, Adams was most indignant. The lieutenant finally had to tell him that such an experiment would not be performed even if he, Holt, had to stand in front of the arsenal with a machine gun to prevent it." Like Project Fantasia, Project Bat is still top secret.



The CIA doesn't want to discuss Project Dog Drag either, but some of the project's documents have been declassified. The idea behind dog drag was simple: an American soldier being chased by a Japanese soldier using a search dog would throw a chemical packet on the ground that would confuse the animal's sense of smell. For more than a year, the government conducted tests using various chemicals, only to find out that the Japanese weren't using tracking dogs in combat. On March 14, 1945, fewer than five months

James Clark is deputy managing editor of The Orlando Sentinel.

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before the end of the war, the chief of the OSS research branch, Major John M. Jeffries, realized that "at present not a great deal is known about its possible use and there are very few calls for it from the various theaters." He called the project off.

The olefactory research that went into Dog Drag was just a warm-up for the most remarkable device of all. On November 20, 1943, the research and development branch of the OSS wrote, "The problem is to provide civilian populations with a small container holding a liquid that, squirted in very small amounts, on invading troops, as in a crowd, would produce unmistakable evidence of extreme personal uncleanliness." The OSS quickly named the mystery chemical "Who Me?" and hired the consulting firm of Arthur D. Little Company to work on it.

The plan was to package the offending chemical in a small, portable container. A member of the underground would surreptitiously squirt the chemical on an enemy soldier. According to an OSS memo, the soldier would smell so bad that his mere presence would "instinctively cause natural repulsion and make a person so contaminated a source of derision or contempt." But what kind of odor would do the trick? It didn't take the boys at OSS long to come up with the answer, and in due time it prepared a paper entitled "Facts About Feces" (complete with a bibliography, which included "Latrines of the East").

For more than a year, scientists worked around the clock to develop the chemical that would win the war. Imagine thousands of Japanese troops so humiliated by their smell that they could no longer fight for the Emperor. But the scientists ran into the inevitable problem: the containers had a habit of leaking, leaving the person who applied the liquid smelling worse than the target. One solution briefly considered was for the underground member to wear a protective garment. Then somebody realized that it would be ludicrously easy for the Japanese to spot the underground members if they were all wearing special gloves.

Just as the application problem was about to be solved, disaster struck.

On December 28, 1944, a chemist for Arthur D. Little wrote the OSS that the scent in question might not bother the Japanese: "I had a valuable conversation with a Navy doctor, who recently returned from Saipan and other points, where he became intimately familiar with the Japanese and their customs (and odors). He confirmed that fecal odors are not especially repulsive to the Japanese. Therefore odors that could ostracize a Jap among his kind must be based on other than the fecal concept."

The scientists weren't about to give up. They decided to try a fishy smell, but struck out again. They found out that the Japanese ate so much fish that they already smelled like fish. The scientists then tried skunky odors and the smell of decaying bodies, but they couldn't come up with the right formula. Then they moved on to a formula that would smell like unwashed feet. But the smell, surprisingly enough, was not sufficiently repulsive.

The scientists worked on scores of formulas and according to an OSS memo finally found the solution in late 1944: "body odors of the Anglo-Saxon race." If the scientists could invent a chemical that smelled like sweaty white Americans, the Japanese would be so repulsed they would give up and go home. According to the OSS files, 10,000 orders for the chemical were received. But the project was eventually dropped, apparently because the scientists were unable to come up with a chemical that reeked of Anglo-Saxon.

The scientists of OSS were now free to devote the final days of the war to another great project called Explosive Coal. The idea was to build a bomb shaped like a lump of coal and place it aboard a train. The device was listed in an OSS catalog of available weapons, but no one knows if it was ever actually used. Along with Projects Emily Post, Pneumonia, Joe Lewis, Maude Miller and Aunt Jemima, it remains top secret 40 years after the war. ■

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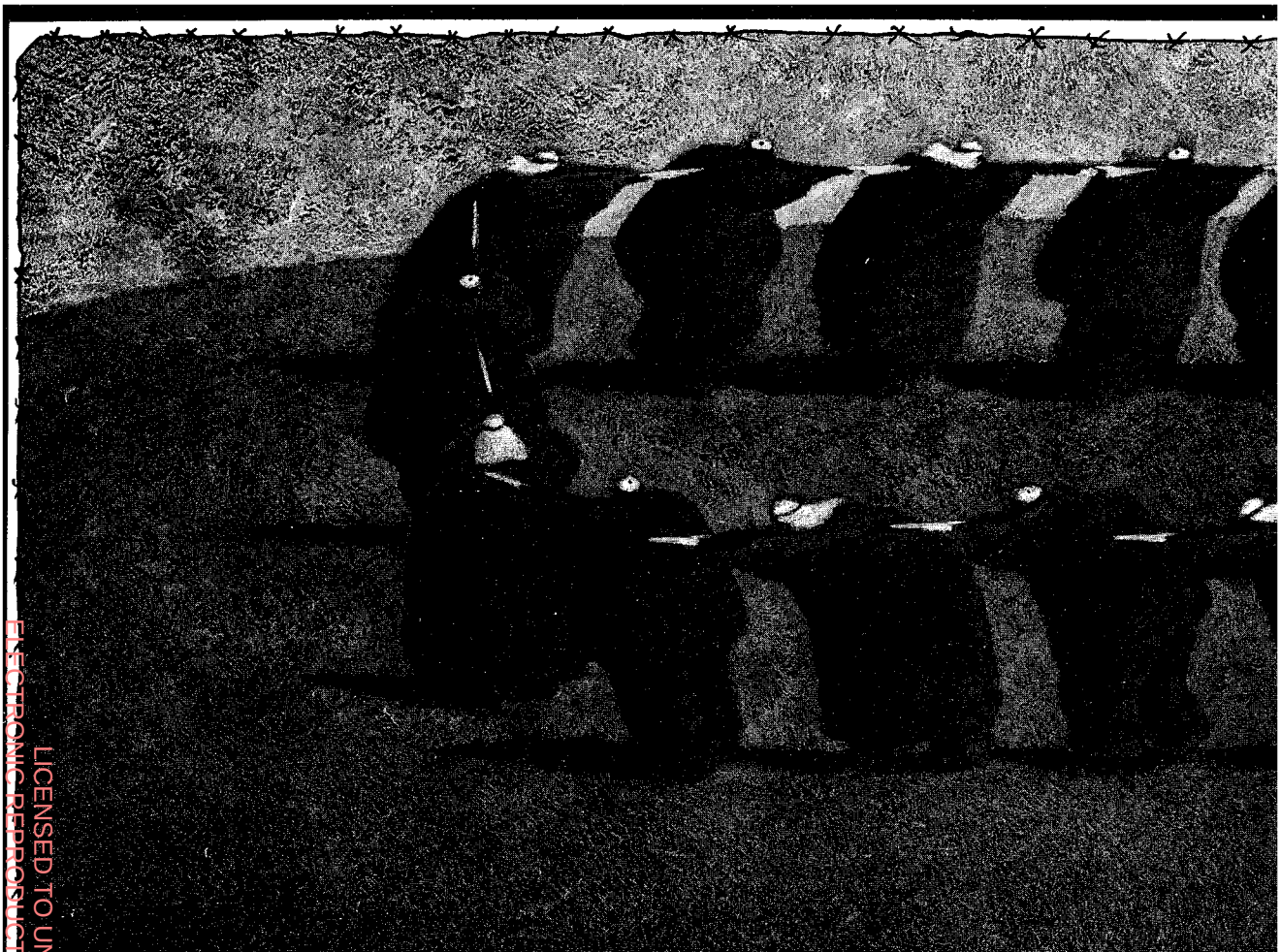

THE MIDDLE EAST IS EVERYBODY'S FAULT.

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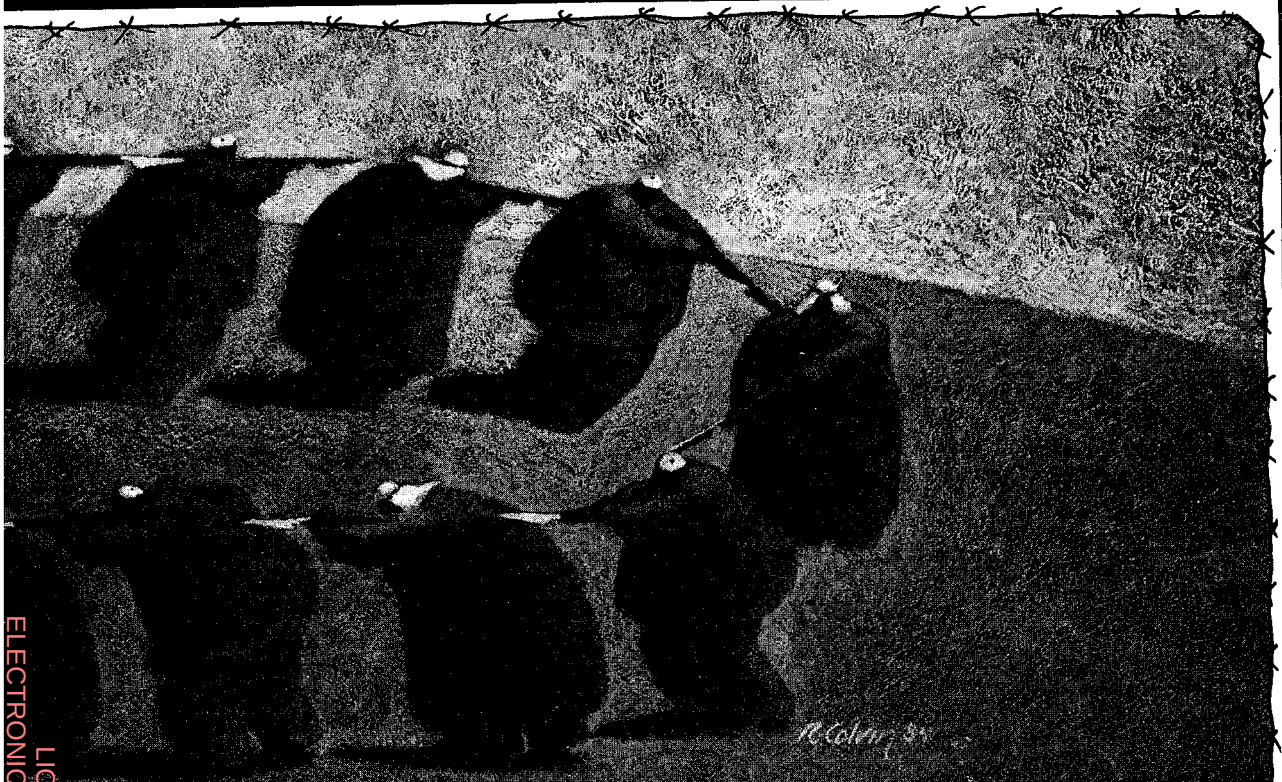

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On the morning of April 18, 1983, I visited the American embassy in Beirut to interview two U.S. Army officers who were supervising the equipping and training of the Lebanese army. We had a long talk about what, in the 1960s in Asia, used to be known as "nation-building."

The officers said the Lebanese army, with American help, was beginning to shake off years of inefficiency and corruption. The new Lebanese commander, they said, had fired the old generals and colonels, taken away the fancy limousines, and required all officers to wear proper military boots instead of the Gucci loafers that were so popular with the Lebanese officer corps. What's more, the new commander had begun to discipline

David Ignatius covered the Middle East from 1980 through 1983 for The Wall Street Journal. *He is a former editor of* The Washington Monthly.

BY DAVID IGNATIUS

his troops. There were close-order drills and calesthenics. Daily calesthenics.

It was an impressive briefing, the kind American military men give better than anyone else in the world. It gave a picture of American methods—logistics, training, discipline—putting a shattered nation back together. It was, with different details, of course, the same briefing that American officers had given 15 years earlier in Saigon, or in the Laotian hills. It was the same briefing, for that matter, that General George C. Marshall would have given about Europe in 1948 or that General Douglas MacArthur would have given about Japan in 1945. Its theme, as idealistic and inspiring as ever, as naive and dangerous as ever, was that America could save the world.

About an hour after I left the embassy, it was rocked by a huge explosion. When I arrived back at what had been the front door, rescuers were gathering pieces of bodies from the rubble. The American ambassador was in a daze, walking around in a baseball warm-up jacket. In the group of numb survivors gathered outside the building I found the two U.S. Army officers who, an hour earlier, had been explaining to me how we were going to save Lebanon. Around the ruined embassy, a company of marines had formed a quick defense perimeter. Clutching their automatic weapons, their eyes darting at a landscape that had suddenly turned hostile, those muscular young marines, average age 19, looked vulnerable and frightened.

That was the beginning of the end for the Americans in Lebanon. It was also the beginning of the end of a ten-year period in which the U.S. tried hard—through four presidential administrations — to bring peace to the Middle East. Lebanon marked the high-water mark, or perhaps the low-water mark, because it was the first time American soldiers were fighting and dying for the sake of the broader "peace process." After the embassy bombing, people in the Middle East began to realize that the Americans couldn't even protect themselves, let alone bring peace to the region.

By February 1984 the Americans had been driven from Lebanon. The Lebanese army that the officers had been so hopeful about had collapsed; 241 American marines had been killed by a truck bomb at the Beirut airport; the alphabet-soup collection of Lebanese militias was still fighting its perpetual civil war. And most Americans—with the instinctive reaction of a child who touches a hot stove and gets burned—wanted to get as far away from Lebanon and the Mideast as possible, for as long as possible.

During the three years I covered the Middle East for an American newspaper, from 1980 to 1983, I observed the rise and fall of American policy in the region. It was a sad and frustrating process to watch, most of all the final stage in Lebanon, in which terrorists forced the U.S. to abandon what had seemed to me, as much as to those officers in the American embassy, a virtuous endeavor.

It is customary when writing about the Middle East to assign blame for its problems to one of the three main actors: Israelis blame the Arabs and the dastardly "Arabists" in the State Department; the Arabs blame the Israelis and the "Zionist Lobby," by which they mean American Jews; most Americans, regardless of which side they favor, usually begin by denouncing the current U.S. administration.

This sterile debate is part of the problem in the Middle East. It is part of the extremism—the search for unilateral solutions—that is destroying the region. The growth of that extremism was the consistent theme of my three years in the Middle East. It was the spirit of Ayatollah Khomeini and Rabbi Kahane, of religious fundamentalism applied to intractable problems. It was evident among Israelis who cared passionately about the welfare and national aspirations of Jews and consigned Palestinians to another moral universe; it was evident among Palestinians who regarded Israel with a crude racism and would have liked nothing better than to drive the Israelis into the sea; and it was evident, perhaps most of all, among Lebanese Christians and Moslems who kidnapped and slaughtered each other at roadside checkpoints because of religion.

The behavior of Arabs and Israelis in this miserable conflict reminded me, on occasion, of professional wrestlers—of the guy who puts his thumb in his opponent's eye when the referee isn't looking and then, when the referee notices, throws up his hands in a gesture of innocence and shouts, "Who, me?" If I learned anything in the time I covered the Middle East it was that all sides are part of the problem. There is more than enough blame to go around.

I have tried to set down here a brief account

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of the short-sightedness and stupidity that I saw on all sides during the time I covered the Middle East. As I write, the third truck bomb in 18 months has destroyed an American installation in Lebanon, and the idea of a new American peace initiative in the Mideast seems laughable. But inevitably there will be another, and perhaps this brief catalogue of folly will be useful for the next wave of hopeful American peacemakers.

THE ARABS

A visitor learns something important about Arab psychology when he travels across the Allenby Bridge, into Jordan from the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Although the traveler is obviously coming from Israeli-controlled territory—indeed could not be crossing the bridge at all without the approval of the Israeli passport authorities on the other side—the Jordanians require what is known as a "clean passport"; that is, one that doesn't have Israeli passport stamps in it.

The Jordanian border post illustrates a form of hypocrisy that is embedded in Arab life. A hundred yards away from Israeli border guards, the Jordanians are officially maintaining the pretense that the state of Israel doesn't exist—that it is a diplomatic leper whose passport stamps aren't fit to touch or even to look at. So a traveler must pretend that he has never been in Israel and furnish a passport without the offending Star of David. The U.S. government, mindful of Arab sensitivities in such matters, provides Americans who travel regularly to both Israel and the Arab states with two passports so that the self-delusion evident at the Jordanian border post can be politely maintained.

The Arab refusal to deal with the reality of Israel is part of a deeper corruption of politics that afflicts the Arab world. In most of the Arab countries, dictators cling to power using the same tired slogans about Arab nationalism and the destruction of Israel that, for a generation, have taken the place of creative political thought; in most countries, the real power lies with the secret police, the *moukhabarat*, who operate as a Pretorian guard for the leader. And in most Arab countries, the problems of society, large and small, continue to be blamed on "the Zionist entity" (the phrase used by proper Arab ideologues who cannot bear even to say the terrible word "Israel").

The politics of self-delusion took root during the days of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Though he died more than a decade ago, Nasser remains the dominant political personality in the Arab world. It is his picture on the posters of the Sunni Moslem militias in West Beirut; it is his statue that extremist Lebanese Christians try regularly to blow up; it is his mantle that every Arab leader, from Qadhafi in Libya to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, tries to claim. Indeed, if you ask an Arab intellectual now in his 30s or 40s what political experience he remembers best from his youth he is likely to say it was listening to Nasser give his speeches in musical Egyptian Arabic on a radio station called "The Voice of the Arabs."

The Lebanon campaign brought the worst possible outcome for the Israelis: many in the West now saw them as bloodthirsty killers, while many Arabs saw them as paper tigers.

It was Nasser who defined Arab nationalism in terms of the negation of Israel, who convinced a generation of Arabs that, until the Israelis were vanquished, the Arabs could not be free. It was Nasser who led the Arabs into the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, urging them on with boasts of Arab military prowess that seem, in retrospect, to have been nothing more than Arab poetry. It was Nasser who, after the Israelis had effectively won the 1967 war in the first hours by destroying the Egyptian Air Force, continued to boast to Jordan's King Hussein of his triumphs. After their crushing defeat in 1967, the Arabs realized the extent of Nasser's lies but couldn't bear to give them up. To the end of his life, Nasser was greeted by masses of people chanting his name, "Nasser!

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Nasser!" which, in Arabic means "Victory! Victory!"

In contrast, Anwar Sadat, who was beloved by Americans and Israelis, was not much liked by the Arabs. He tried to free Egypt and the rest of the Arab world from the reign of self-delusion by making peace with Israel. Westerners saw it as an extraordinary act of political courage. But among many Arabs, it was seen as an act of capitulation. A poor Egyptian fallahin, trying to explain to me why Sadat had shamed Egypt, put it this way: "Sadat let his wife dance with Jimmy Carter." The dancing incident symbolized to him the way Sadat had humiliated himself by adopting Western ways and seeking Western approval.

This sense of shame—above all a fear of being shamed before Israel and the West—is a pervasive theme in Arab culture. It suggests a powerful sense of inferiority toward the West, which I suspect is the driving force behind the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. This defiant Islam offers the Arabs a way out of a confrontation with Israel and the West in which they fear they will be defeated and humiliated.

It is the Palestinians who have suffered most from the Arab politics of self-delusion, which has reached its fullest flower in the person of Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Arafat, to put the matter bluntly, has been an abysmally bad leader for his people.

I last saw Arafat in October 1983 in Tripoli, Lebanon, where he was under siege from Syrian forces in another one of his Perils of Pauline dramas. There was the usual PLO press-relations nonsense: trekking out to see the ragged troops at the front line; racing back to Arafat's command bunker with a maniacal driver from Al Fatah; and then waiting for the Great Man to arrive.

I had heard Arafat often enough, by that time, that I knew most of the lines by heart: the Palestinians are not the Red Indians; attacks on the PLO are a conspiracy between the U.S., Israel, and Syria; the Palestinians are the missing number in the Middle East equation. All of this said by Arafat with his head trembling and his eyes popping out of their sockets.

Eric Rouleau, the Middle East correspondent for *Le Monde* and a man who knows Arafat very well, once described him as a "clown." What is sad is that Arafat's clownish behavior managed to trivialize the suffering of his own people. It is especially sad, when there are so many brilliant Palestinian doctors, university professors, and businessmen, that their international symbol is this bald little man with the stubbly beard.

Arafat has failed in the basic obligation of a political leader. He has refused to make choices—to choose honestly whether the PLO will be a military organization, trying to overcome Israel by force of arms, or a political organization trying to negotiate the best deal possible for its constituents. Instead, he has tried to have it both ways—to talk peace and war at once. The clearest sign of this is Arafat's maddening game about whether he recognizes Israel's right to exist. When meeting with Westerners, he will hint, suggest, imply (but never quite say directly) that he does; when meeting with Arabs, he will generally spout rejectionist rhetoric. It was never clear to me, in three years of covering Arafat, whom he thought he was kidding.

The PLO is not only badly led, it is thoroughly corrupt. Many of its high officials have made considerable fortunes shaking down Arab governments for protection money, selling their services to foreign intelligence services, or simply converting PLO funds to private use.

"We made a study in 1982 of the Palestinian leadership below Arafat," recalls a Lebanese intelligence source. "We found that some were working for the Israelis, some were working for the Americans, some for the Syrians, some for the Saudis, some for the Libyans, some for the Egyptians. But we could not find one who was workng only for his people."

The residents of the West Bank pay the price for the PLO's corruption and bad leadership. While they struggle to survive under Israeli occupation, Arafat plays semantic games about whether he recognizes Israel's right to exist. For Palestinian farmers, Israeli occupation means pleading or bribing for permission to export grapes or plant new fruit trees; for Arafat, it as an abstraction that is debated in endless conferences and press interviews. There are some West Bank Palestinians who think that Arafat has dithered so long that it may now be too late for a negotiated settlement. The expansion of Israeli settlements during the Begin years, they believe, has irrevocably altered the character of the West Bank.

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In February 1983, at a gathering in Algiers of a PLO group called the Palestine National Congress, a West Bank mayor looked out over a group of PLO officials, flunkies, and hangers-on who were gorging themselves on one of the endless free meals available for delegates. "It makes me sick," he said. "There is not one of them who could be elected to be the *moukhtar* [mayor] of the smallest village in the West Bank." Perhaps the reason these assembled worthies of the PLO were never willing to negotiate a settlement of the Palestinian problem, the mayor said, was that they knew the moment they did so the free ride would be over.

The Arab failure in the Middle East, epitomized by Arafat and the PLO, is one of honesty and courage. For the sake of a perverse sense of dignity, they have refused to negotiate a settlement to a conflict they know they cannot win by force of arms.

THE ISRAELIS

After a thorough check by Israeli security guards, a visitor can proceed to the inner sanctum of Israeli democracy: the Knesset dining room. There at one table, is Shimon Peres, the Labor party leader who is now Prime Minister. Nearby is former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who is probably saying terrible things about Peres. At another table is Geula Cohen, loudly arguing the policies of her ultra-right faction known as Tehiya. Maybe she's talking to Eliahu Ben-Elissar, former ambassador to Egypt, who is chairman of the Knesset foreign relations committee. The fat man making the rounds nearby is Avraham Shapira, the political godfather of the ultra-orthodox Agudat Yisrael party and, for all his religiosity, a political wheeler-dealer who would put the Cook County Democratic party to shame.

The Knesset's non-stop political bargaining, conducted here over coffee and cake, is the embodiment of a nation that sees itself as a large and noisy family—whose members are always arguing and competing for attention but in the end are always united against the hostile world outside. You have to travel a bit in the Middle East to appreciate how rare this sort of democracy is in that part of the world. Israeli democracy is what honest Arabs covet most from Israel and see as the key to Israel's military strength.

Yet in so many other ways Israel is a nation in trouble. The economy is a mess; the political leadership is weak; the nation is sharply divided over what to do about the West Bank; and the Israeli army is still bogged down in an unpopular war in Lebanon. Even the blessing of Israeli democracy seems a curse these days: a desultory campaign in 1984 produced an inconclusive result, and, after much haggling, a coalition government headed by two losers—Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir. Below them is an array of small parties preoccupied with special interests.

The problems that were so evident in 1984 are symptoms of a more basic difficulty: Israel, as a society, has begun to lose its way. Its leaders, in recent years, have spent more time running away from problems than solving them.

Nothing in Israel today is quite the way the Zionist pioneers imagined it would be. What was planned as a secular Jewish state is instead becoming a religious one, with elaborate administrative powers granted to the rabbinical authorities and the orthodox religious parties. What was imagined as a homeland for the Jewish people, which would gather in exiles and end the diaspora, is instead the land of the time-share condominium; it is the poor stepchild of a Jewish diaspora that has grown more secure than it once was and doesn't really want to live in Israel, at least not full time.

Finally, what was imagined as an outpost of Western culture is becoming, slowly but surely, a Middle Eastern nation, as the demographic balance shifts away from the European Jews who came in the first waves of Zionist immigration and toward the Jews who came to Israel from Arab lands after 1948. A visitor gets a sense of the social strains brought on by this demographic change the first time he hears an enlightened liberal Ashkenazi, raised on a socialist kibbutz, refer derisively to the Sephardic Jews from Morocco as "the blacks."

For a nation with so many problems, there remained in the early 1980s one fixed beacon: the nearly universal conviction that Arafat and his gang of murderous Palestinian henchmen were "terrorists" who must be smashed. That was something on which Mozart-loving kibbutzniks and Moroccan-born policemen could agree, and

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it provided a kind of escape valve for Israel's internal problems. The poorest Sephardi teenager, with an Uzi submachine gun in his hand, was more powerful than the Arabs who had pushed around his grandparents back in Casablanca or Baghdad. And it was with that defiant spirit that a Sephardi-backed government invaded Lebanon in 1982 in an operation known as "Peace for Galillee."

On June 10, 1982 the Israeli Defense Force arrived in Baabda on the outskirts of Beirut. It was like the old movie footage of the Allies liberating France: Lebanese Christian girls were leaning out the windows smiling at the Israelis; Lebanese merchants, in an unusually magnanimous mood, were accepting Israeli shekels. The Israeli soldiers, tired after their dash to Beirut, basked in the attention and posed for pictures beside their tanks and APCs. In Christian East Beirut there was a festival mood, as if St. George had finally arrived to slay the Palestinian dragon. And even in Moslem West Beirut, most Lebanese seemed glad that someone had finally decided to throw out the Palestinians. The problem was that the Israeli "liberators," having pushed all the way to Beirut, didn't know what to do next.

The 1982 invasion of Lebanon was a classic Israeli maneuver. In less than a week the armored units of the IDF had raced to Beirut, bypassing areas of strong resistance and leaving them for mop-up crews. It was a lightning operation, aimed at intimidating the enemy, shattering his morale, making him panic and run. The Israelis—above all, their commander, General Ariel Sharon—had been using this strategy of intimidation successfully against the Arabs for 34 years. Hit hard, move fast, confuse and demoralize. It had worked brilliantly in three major wars, allowing the tiny Israeli army to trounce much larger Arab forces. And it seemed to be working again in Lebanon. As the Israelis surged across the border, the PLO forces mostly scattered and ran.

General Sharon must have assumed that the same thing would happen once he reached Beirut. But it didn't. For a variety of reasons, including an American effort to restrain the Israelis, the PLO forces in Beirut generally stood their ground, forcing the Israelis to begin a long siege under the scrutiny of American television.

The siege of Beirut presented the Israelis with a painful conflict between military and political priorities. The sensible military tactic was obvious—a campaign of intimidation that would frighten the Palestinians and force them to leave the city. In practice, that meant dropping on West Beirut leaflets warning residents to flee for their lives; it meant mock air raids over the city in the middle of the night, producing bone-jarring sonic booms and a perpetually sleepless population; it meant shelling the city from sea and land, and bombing it from the air.

The problem for the Israelis was that these tactics succeeded more in frightening American TV viewers than in intimidating the Palestinians. Every day, even as television cameramen sent home more hair-raising footage, the PLO became increasingly convinced that the Israelis were not, after all, going to pound them to smithereens. As I wrote from Beirut at the time, "The Israeli dilemma is how to appear belligerent enough to frighten the Palestinians, without seeming so belligerent that they alienate critics at home and in the U.S."(As the war dragged on and the Israelis kept moving north and tightening their siege, reporters in Beirut took to wearing t-shirts that read: "Operation Peace for Galillee—Scandinavian Division.")

By the end of the Lebanon campaign the Israelis had achieved the worst possible outcome: they had convinced a large segment of Western public opinion that they were bloodthirsty killers, and they had convinced a large segment of Palestinian and Arab opinion that they were paper tigers.

During and after the war there was considerable whining from Israelis and their American supporters about the news media and its coverage of the war. Studies bristling with footnotes sought to document allegedly biased coverage by such newspapers as *The Washington Post*. NBC's John Chancellor was excoriated for delivering an anti-Israel standup.

This round of press-baiting was a sad exercise that entirely missed the point. What caused problems for Israel in the summer of 1982 weren't the loaded casualty estimates that appeared in print, or the banal and tendentious TV commentaries, but the daily television images of the war itself. The issue raised by the events of that summer wasn't whether American reporters were biased against Israel, but whether any country can fight a war when the daily mayhem is being shown on television. The press-baiting did Israel itself a

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disservice by trivializing the issues raised by the war. The implication—that everything would have worked out fine if it hadn't been for the damned journalists—was one that any Israeli who had first-hand experience of the war would reject.

The resignation in August 1983 of Menachem Begin—obviously a shattered man—stated more sadly and eloquently than any press commentary that the war had been a disastrous mistake. I saw Begin in his office in Jerusalem shortly before he resigned, and I will never forget the sight of that proud old man, his body wasting away because he had lost his appetite, shuffling down the hall toward the door. His closest aides, who had worked with him through a career of bravado and bombast, described him as a man overcome by grief about the war. Every day, they said, the prime minister would demand briefings about the latest casualties and terrorist attacks in Lebanon; each time he would ask: "Was there anything we could have done?" Describing this morose behavior, his personal secretary said simply: "He is sad."

It was like watching King Lear in the last act, watching a man tormented by a recognition of his own folly. Begin had devoted his entire life to the state of Israel. Yet he had embarked as prime minister on an unnecessary war—what Israelis call a war of "choice"—that had left Israel weaker, in many ways, than it had been before. For a man like Begin, that recognition must have been agony.

During the time I covered the Middle East, my newspaper had two long interviews with Begin. In these sessions, we saw an expansive and humorous side of him that was usually hidden from Americans. When I mentioned once that I had read his book, *The Revolt*, he responded, "What? You were having trouble sleeping maybe?" When a colleague asked him what was the greatest achievement of the Jewish people through their long history, he cocked his head, as if he couldn't quite believe that someone had asked such a question, and then gave a long, deadpan answer about how the Jews had invented "the day of rest."

I liked Begin and admired many of his qualities. But I think he was a bad leader who squandered an opportunity to make a lasting peace with the Arabs. He blew his first opportunity after Camp David by failing to broaden the peace agreement with Egypt into a solution of the Palestinian problem. Instead, Begin encouraged more Israeli settlements on the West Bank and got into a legalistic argument with Jimmy Carter over whether he had promised a settlement freeze; meanwhile the momentum of the peace process was lost and, in 1981, Anwar Sadat was dead.

Begin blew his second chance in 1982, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In Ronald Reagan's September 1 peace plan, the U.S. tried to capitalize on the weakened state of Arafat and the PLO to draw Jordan's King Hussein into the Camp David process. It was a rare opportunity to work toward a settlement that might give the Israelis a generation of peace. But Begin, ever the lawyer, treated the Reagan peace plan as a threat and did everything he could to sabotage it, including dragging his feet in negotiations over withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. It was a short-sighted, foolish decision, and the Israelis paid for it twice over—once in losing a precious chance for peace and again in the additional lives lost in Lebanon.

Begin's error, in my judgment, was that he acted as if he were doing the U.S. and the Arabs a favor in negotiating peace agreements. He had built his entire career on saying "no," in relying on what he liked to call "the fighting Jew," rather than well-meaning mediators. Compromise simply wasn't his style, and he seemed almost grudging in signing the Camp David agreements.

Yet the outcome of the Begin years, paradoxically, was that it showed the limits on Israeli military power. The Israelis, for all their might, could not remake Lebanon; they could not force the Syrians to capitulate; they could not destroy Arafat and the PLO as a political force; and they could not suppress Palestinian nationalism on the West Bank. Indeed, it's possible that the war in Lebanon and its aftermath left the Arabs stronger and less afraid of the Israelis.

The task of any Israeli leader is to create the conditions for Israel's security 10 or 20 years from now, rather than only next year. Today the Israelis remain stronger than the Arabs, but there are some disturbing trends. With each war the Arabs have become better armed, better trained, and better able to assert their natural advantage in men and material. The Israelis, with the exception of their Air Force, haven't improved

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much. At some point the trend lines will cross, and the Israelis may find themselves in a war they cannot win, save through the "victory" of nuclear weapons.

THE AMERICANS

Over lunch in a fashionable restaurant in Washington, light years away from the torment of Beirut, a former National Security Council official explained why Americans should care about the Middle East. It is highly likely, he said, that by the year 2000 nuclear weapons will be used there.

The catastrophe will begin, the former official said, with an incident of nuclear terrorism in Israel. Terrorists will detonate a small nuclear device in the densely populated area around Tel Aviv. Because the buildings in Tel Aviv are frail, mostly without steel girders or reinforced concrete, the firestorm caused by the nuclear explosion will produce enormous damage and loss of life.

The Israelis will lash out in blind fury, predicted the former official, even though they may not be sure who was responsible for the attack. They will look for the most likely suspect—Iraq, perhaps, or Syria, or Libya, or maybe all three. The standard Israeli procedure in responding to terrorism is to strike back harder than the original attack. That would mean a nuclear retaliation against one or more Arab capitals. What would happen next, said the former official, would depend on the ability of the U.S. and the Soviets to contain the crisis.

This appalling scenario helps explain why the U.S. worked so hard during the past decade to negotiate a Mideast peace settlement. The Arab-Israeli conflict carried, quite literally, the seeds of World War III. The premise was that the U.S., because of its friendly relations with both sides, could "mediate" an agreement that would be impossible—unthinkable—without American help.

Through four administrations, the U.S. tried to advance the peace process. The strategy was to take advantage of crises in the region—mostly wars—that provided creative opportunities. Henry Kissinger began the effort in 1973, in the aftershock of the Yom Kippur war, with his "step-by-step diplomacy"; he produced Israeli disengagement agreements on the Syrian and Egyptian fronts. Jimmy Carter harnessed the euphoric emotion produced by Sadat's trip to Jerusalem to pull Israel and Egypt toward the Camp David agreements. Ronald Reagan tried to exploit the crisis caused by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon to create a federation between the West Bank and Jordan.

What is striking, reviewing this history of American mediation efforts, is that with each new peace initiative, the U.S. became a bit clumsier. Kissinger had a broad strategic vision of what he wanted to accomplish in the Middle East and, by and large, he succeeded brilliantly. Carter was less skillful, but he had the good sense to follow Sadat's lead and to commit his own prestige to the peace process at a crucial moment. But by the time of the Reagan administration, the great American mediation machine seemed to have run out of gas. Not only was President Reagan reluctant to get involved himself in peace negotiations, so was his secretary of state, George Shultz.

A poor Egyptian fallahin, trying to explain to me why Sadat had shamed Egypt, put it this way: 'Sadat let his wife dance with Jimmy Carter.'

The Reagan peace plan never really had a chance. The Israelis rejected it the day it was announced. King Hussein played Hamlet for a few months, trying to make up his mind about whether to join negotiations, before he capitulated to Syrian pressure and rejected the Reagan plan. The administration, by that time, barely noticed. Pinned down in Lebanon, the U.S. had lost sight of its broader objectives in the Middle East and was drifting toward the disasters of

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1983 and 1984.

The problem was partly poor performance by American diplomats, at home and abroad. In the field, American embassies often seemed the last place to go for reliable information about local political developments. The embassies had become large bureaucracies and the staff was too often absorbed in administrative paper work. In Egypt, for example, there was an air-conditioned skyscraper full of AID bureaucrats reading reports, studying planning documents, meeting with contractors, writing evaluations—while outside in the sweltering heat the problems of the Egyptian economy grew worse month by month. What Cairo residents noticed was the fleet of poorly made American buses, whose deafening exhaust noise became known as "the Voice of America." It is a measure of the weakness of American diplomacy that in Egypt, our most important Arab ally, CBS News knew that Anwar Sadat was dead before the American ambassador did.

The situation wasn't much better in Beirut. Though the foreign service and military officers there were often outstanding people, they became preoccupied with the routine of keeping the embassy functioning and, as things got worse, with trying to stay alive. American journalists could and did travel the length of the country, back and forth, talking with the leaders of every militia and political faction. U.S. embassy officials would have loved to do the same thing. But they were too busy filing cables or arranging visits for American big-shots.

Back in Washington, on the sixth floor of the State Department's headquarters in Foggy Bottom, the Near East and South Asia Bureau spent its time processing all the paperwork generated by the embassies in the Middle East. "NEA" should have been the nerve center of American Mideast policy. Yet despite the generally high quality of the individual foreign service officers, it didn't function well. The State Department reacted rather than planned; it devised tactics rather than strategy.

What the U.S. seems to have lost in the Middle East, by the 1980s, was the ability to manipulate. The U.S. had this skill as recently as the Kissinger years, and it made diplomacy much easier. Lebanese remember a time when the American ambassador needed only to mention at a dinner party that the U.S. favored a particular course of action and the leading politicians would scurry to adjust themselves to what they took to be the American policy. At that time, America could manipulate because it was feared and trusted. By 1984 not even the 16-inch shells of the *New Jersey* could convince Lebanese that the U.S. was serious.

Being manipulative in the early 1980s in the Middle East would have meant forcing the Lebanese Christian government to share power with the Moslems; it would have meant cutting a weak and vulnerable Syrian regime down to size before it could subvert American policy in Lebanon and intimidate King Hussein. But most of all, a successful American policy in the Middle East would have meant manipulating Israel.

The U.S.-Israeli relationship is probably the most complex and neurotic in the world of diplomacy. Both sides feel unloved, unappreciated, mistreated, ill-used. When they're trying to kiss and make up, both sides often talk as if American and Israeli interests are identical. When they're mad, both sides want to sit in a corner and sulk.

The problem is that it's an unequal contest. In shaping American policy in the Middle East, the State Department "Arabists" simply aren't a match for the pro-Israeli lobby and its supporters in Congress. As a result, the U.S.-Israeli relationship during the last years of the Begin government became a classic case of the tail wagging the dog. The Israelis would defy American policy—would reject, for example, a peace initiative by an American president on the very day it was proposed—and the response of Congress would be to offer the Israelis more aid. The Israelis would defy American pleas and suddenly pull their troops out of the Shuf Mountains in September 1983, triggering a disastrous war, and the American response, a few months later, would be a new strategic cooperation agreement with Jerusalem.

What these antics demonstrated was that the premise of American mediation in the Middle East—the notion that the U.S. could be an even-handed broker between the Arabs and Israelis—was wrong. The U.S. isn't even-handed, it is strongly pro-Israel. That is something that is regularly proclaimed by politicians from both parties, and it's true. Strong American support for Israel—whether you think it's good or bad—is

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a political fact of life.

The failure of American mediation may be a mixed blessing, because ultimately mediation isn't the answer to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mediation keeps the two parties at arm's length; it is part of the crazy system in the Middle East in which Jordanians won't look at Israeli passport stamps and Israelis call all Palestinian political leaders "terrorists." The answer isn't for the two sides to talk to each other through the U.S., it is for them to talk to each other directly.

One of the few bright spots in the Middle East these days is that this process of direct communication has begun. Recognizing the hopelessness of American mediation, Israelis and Palestinians have begun talking to each other. Both sides in this dialogue are attacked within their own ranks as "traitors," but they're still talking.

When I returned to Washington in December 1983 after three years of covering the Middle East, I tended to get into arguments about Lebanon. The marines had been killed, the Lebanese government was collapsing, and the conventional wisdom back home was that it all had been an absurd waste of time. Perhaps I just got tired of hearing lectures about security at the Marine compound from newspaper columnists and TV reporters who wouldn't have known a truck bomb from a Welcome Wagon. For whatever reason, I would get angry when I heard people say the U.S. should get out of Lebanon.

We're there because it's the right thing to do, I would say. We're there because it's a nice little country at the mercy of a bunch of vicious thugs. We're there because it's a democracy, and if the big democracies don't protect the little ones, the little ones aren't going to make it. We're there because we don't want to be pushed around by a two-bit country like Syria. At about this point someone would say, "Yes, you must have had an interesting time in the Middle East," and change the subject.

Haranguing my friends about America's mission in the Third World, I felt sometimes as if I had fallen out of a time capsule from the early 1960s. My arguments about Lebanon were not all that different from those of the young men and women who came back from Saigon in 1963 mumbling the same phrases: marvelous people, need our help, fighting for democracy, stand up against aggression, don't abandon our friends, stay the course.

Most people, including me, stopped arguing about Lebanon after the marines left. But as I think back over my time there, I am left with an odd question that applies to the Middle East, Vietnam, and the rest of the untidy Third World: Is it possible for the United States to do good abroad, to make the world better?

The answer isn't obvious. During the period of the Vietnam war, it seemed to me that for the U.S., "doing good" overseas was mostly a neutral or a negative process; it meant not doing harm, not making the world any worse than it already was. The U.S. didn't seem to be helping in Vietnam, so the answer was to stop doing harm and get out.

That still seems to me the right view of Vietnam. But in the Middle East I think that "doing good" is a more complicated problem, requiring a more positive, assertive—even interventionist—approach. It was right for the U.S. to try to negotiate a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, even if that meant manipulating all the parties to force a deal. It was right for the U.S. to try to rebuild Lebanon, even if that meant the deaths of American marines. What was wrong was to try these things and fail.

The Middle East is a rough neighborhood. Perhaps a country that isn't prepared to play rough—that does nothing, for example, when two embassies and a Marine headquarters are bombed—should play in a safer part of town. But if the U.S. is going to stay in the Middle East, it will have to operate more skillfully and courageously. As a Lebanese friend said in February 1984, on the day President Reagan announced he was pulling the marines out of Beirut: "If you don't have the will to use a gun, don't carry one. It's dangerous."

My own judgment is that the U.S. should stand its ground in the Middle East and fight—one hopes, diplomatically—for what it believes in. America can't save the world, but it can use its power wisely and efficiently to help countries like Lebanon. It can't make Arabs and Israelis love each other, but it can guide them—or prod them—toward agreements. The good the U.S. can do in the Middle East is worth the risks in trying. ■

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At VISTA we were less interested in priming the pump than in fixing the bucket.

I Was a Spear Carrier in the War on Poverty

When I tell people that in the late sixties I was a VISTA Volunteer on Manhattan's Lower East Side, I sometimes sense in them a certain reverential awe, as though I were a veteran of the good war. This I greatly enjoy. But the impression is not entirely accurate.

Though a member of the generation that came of age during the sixties, I was never really of it. The turmoil I experienced during my college years was largely personal, and unlikely as it now sounds, both the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war were like a commotion in a room down the hall. The closest I came in those college years to a political act was joining the Young Republicans.

This was mainly to help a friend who needed votes for an opposition slate, but it was not out of character either. One of my first enduring political memories was the time my grandfather pulled me aside at a family gathering to dispense a bit of advice. He had suffered through a dozen ulcerous years of Roosevelt and he was not about to let his grandson go down that ideological drain. "Jonny," he admonished me, apropos of nothing, "I want you to remember one thing. YOU CAN'T PRIME THE PUMP." My formative political reading consisted of such fare as Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*, Herbert W. Philbrick's *I Led Three Lives*, and Harry and Bonaro Overstreet's *What We Must Know About Communism*. Were he still around when I finished high school, my grandfather would have been proud of my long senior paper on John Maynard Keynes, in which I concluded that a government that manipulated the economy was a menace to our freedom.

College didn't really alter any of these beliefs. But somehow in my mind, conservatism had always been connected to the idea of service; if the government wasn't supposed to do very much, then wasn't it all the more important that individuals pick up the slack? I didn't see how you could fob off humanity's well-being onto automatic cosmic processes, the way communists do with their historical dialectic and capitalists do with their invisible hand. This was the Boy Scout Manual view of individual good deeds rather than a yen for what was called, at the time, "social change."

During the summer after my junior year, I worked on a house painting and tutoring project in the black Boston ghetto of Roxbury. At the end of my senior year, the "future" suddenly looming before me like a cantankerous creditor, and the draft beginning to loom up as well, I found a VISTA application outside my college dining hall. Actually, it was the Peace Corps that had captured my imagination. But the Peace Corps application was long and complicated, and they seemed to want skills like animal husbandry that were not my strong suit. The VISTA application was much simpler. I felt some trepidation, nevertheless, submitting my meager credentials before those high people in Washington. A few days later they called, person to person, and asked if I could start training in June.

These events, and those that followed, have

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By Jonathan Rowe

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been on my mind during the last four years. President Reagan might have been expected to embrace VISTA's volunteer spirit: the way it tries to help communities help themselves, the patriotism that is implicit in taking time out to help your country. He might have seen what a bargain the government and the country get when they tap the enthusiasm of young (and old and middle-aged) people for, at present, $7,800 a year, all costs included. But Reagan first tried to eliminate the program, and when Congress wouldn't let him, his underlings set out to run it into the ground. Key positions have gone unfilled for months, even years. There has been absolutely no national recruiting of the kind that made it possible for me to pick up an application outside my college dining hall. They even removed VISTA from the stationery of Action, the agency of which VISTA is a part.

For people like Thomas Pauken, Reagan's Action director, VISTA is a symbol: social "activism," the antiwar protests, Hayden and Fonda, the works. Indeed, VISTA did arise as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. It *has* tended to attract volunteers of other than Reaganite persuasion, largely because they seem less interested than Reaganites in making money. VISTA volunteers *have* found that to improve the lot of people low on the ladder, they sometimes have had to do what the realtors, gun-owners, and cigarette companies do, which is to try to bring some pressure to bear upon elected officials.

More specifically, the Reaganites have objected to the way Sam Brown, who was Carter's Action head, dispensed large VISTA grants to groups with nationwide organizing agendas, like Associated Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Fair enough. But they have inflated this objection into a caricature of the entire program that bears virtually zero relationship to what I experienced as a VISTA volunteer. The funny part is that I think Ronald Reagan himself would approve of at least part of what I saw and learned. As for the other part, I wish he had been there to see it with me. Pauken too.

Sobering up the white boys

When I set off for Springfield, Massachusetts a few days after graduation for VISTA "training," I felt a little like a Marine recruit headed for Camp Lejeune. It did not turn out quite that way.

I lived with a blind woman—a real live member of the community—who kept getting the mineral oil and the cooking oil confused, and I

"I stayed with a blind woman in Springfield, Massachusetts."

was assigned to a local storefront action group of the kind that were proliferating at the time. The director of this group, a large man of obvious Mau-Mauing potential, told two other volunteers and me to go register new voters in a housing project that was set off like a dump on the outskirts of town. That was it.

Looking back, I think the primary purpose of this assignment may have been to give the white boys something to do, and perhaps sober them up a bit. Not appreciating such subtleties at the time, I undertook the task with earnest zeal, trooping up and down the stinking stairwells, knocking on doors, trying to cajole people into coming with us to city hall a week or so hence. Innocence is a greatly undervalued asset, and we actually spent an entire day at the end of this canvass ferrying new voters back and forth. The people at the store front seemed no less surprised than those at city hall.

All the while, there were uplifting lectures on poverty by officials from Washington, visits to black churches, and excursions to such places as a migrant labor camp, where we were all duly appalled. What I really needed was advice on walking a ghetto street at 1 a.m. and on attaching a lock to a tenement doorframe that has been reduced to sawdust by holes drilled upon holes

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(not to mention a little Spanish). The VISTA training program, unfortunately, seemed to have been designed by sociologists, not police patrolmen and locksmiths.

There was no sergeant presiding over this training. Instead, there was a gregarious local social worker we called "Auntie Harriet," who fed and cheer-led us, and generally represented the acme of Jewish motherhood. Aside from a pregnancy in the ranks, the cause of most concern was the volunteers who complained they were given neither sufficient supervision nor "meaningful" work to do. I ignored most of this and went about registering voters, a response which caused the program psychiatrist to puff thoughtfully on his pipe at the required interview at the end of the training. ("You just, ah, withdrew, is that correct. . .?") Again, a locksmith would have been more helpful.

From there, I was assigned to something called the Mobilization for Youth, on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The gangs, the drugs, the crime— I had no idea how I was going to fight poverty in a place like that. It was pretty scary.

'There is nothing you can do'

The Lower East Side was the port of entry for the wave of immigrants, especially Eastern European Jews, that flooded the city in the late 19th century. It is a place of legend, captured in the movie, *Hester Street*, and the classic American novel, *Call It Sleep*. Entertainers like George Jessel and Eddie Cantor grew up here; Jacob Riis discovered how the other half lives;. institutions like the Henry Street Settlement, the Educational Alliance, and the garment workers union defined a whole era of American idealism. Garment district tycoons with homes in Scarsdale or on Long Island started as pushcart peddlers on these same streets.

As these original occupants—many of them at least—moved out, and new immigrants from the Caribbean and the South moved in, the neighborhood began to unravel. In the old days nobody locked his door, even though the Lower East Side was the most crowded area in the world, and neighbors visited from one tenement floor to the next. Now there were still enclaves of stability. But the ubiquitous metal grates across windows and storefronts gave the dark streets the feeling of a city under seige.

That summer, 1967, was like the autumn ripeness before the final decline. Owing largely to the controlled rents—apartments could be had

"'Auntie Harriet' fed and cheer-led us."

for $37.50 a month—the Lower East Side had become Haight-Ashbury East, the Atlantic capital of the Flower Children. Emaciated acid freaks and Hare Krishna chanters peopled the street corners. The processional organ strains of Procol Harem and the Doors somehow blended with the Latin music blaring from the record stores, the black nationalists, store front evangelists and Hasidim. There were front stoop domino games on milk crates, polkas at the Ukrainian social clubs, and bocci at the corner of East Houston and First Street. And always, those window grates and the specter of crime. It was at first terrifying, but then rapturous. My first night there, I went to Katz's delicatessen and sat next to a man who said he was Art Garfunkel's uncle. I could barely imagine what wonders must lie ahead.

Life was not so rapturous, of course, for those who were there because they had no choice. It was for these—the Puerto Ricans and blacks, primarily—that the Mobilization for Youth was founded in 1962. MFY's main focus was job training, including the creation of enterprises, such as a gas station and a luncheonette, to employ the people so trained. But MFY also engaged in direct action against what its organizers saw as the perpetrators of distress in the neighborhood. They organized rent strikes, picketed construction sites over union hiring practices, took on public school principals, and in general made a ruckus not seen on the Lower East Side since the garment workers took on the bosses earlier in the century.

None of this direct action endeared MFY to its targets. At the same time, factions at city hall

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thought that the millions MFY was receiving from the federal government should be channeled instead through themselves. In 1964 the *Daily News* accused the organization of being a "Red honeycomb," prompting an orgy of investigation that was referred to within MFY simply as "the trouble." MFY survived, but the place was never the same. It was the prototype, I heard repeatedly, for the federal War on Poverty. But by the time I arrived at 255 East Houston Street, an old catering establishment that had been converted into an MFY center, the organization was approaching middle age.

"Which one of you is from Harvard?" Rita was asking. "Is there someone here from Harvard?" Rita was a sturdy Latin woman, bronze and handsome, who had just emerged from a classroom in PS 82 at the corner of Madison and Grand Streets. I had just reported here with another VISTA volunteer to work with the Neighborhood Youth Corps, a summer job program for teenagers that MFY had contracted to run. As the object of Rita's question, I was embarrassed and a little confused. Why did she have to bring up Harvard?

She ushered me into the old classroom, where ochre computer cards were stacked up on hinge-top desks. Tito, a gangly Puerto Rican youth with one arm, sat at one of the desks, flipping doggedly through a stack. Elsewhere in the room sat one or two others, similarly engaged.

These punch cards, I learned, had spawned a crisis in the Youth Corps program. The crew leaders at the service agencies that served as job sites had filled them out incorrectly, and as a result the entire payroll process had gagged. Checks for the Lower East Side were being sent to Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville, kids had not been paid for weeks, and there had been sit-ins and threats of violence. Harvard was going to help straighten things out.

This was not exactly the sort of work the VISTA posters and forward-looking logo had suggested. But since New York was overwhelming and I had no idea how else to wage war on poverty there, the punch cards were at least a way to keep busy and feel like I was contributing.

I worked under Ron, a canny young black from Harlem who had the gift of ironic detachment from the confusion around him. We sat in the classroom, correcting card upon card, while "Whiter Shades of Pale" came from Tito's radio on the window sill. There was no shortage of administrators, who seemed to issue forth from the inner sanctums of PS 82 like clowns from the Volkswagen in the old circus trick. What they all did, I never quite grasped. I began to supect that the Neighborhood Youth Corps was intended to provide summer employment not just for ghetto youth but for high school guidance counselors from Brooklyn as well. There was also, of course, a generous provision for MFY's administrative expenses.

As best I can recall, neither these administrators nor I got out into the field a great deal to actually see the program. What I did see gave me cause for concern. On the positive side, Youth Corps workers were reading to elderly folks with failing eyesight and doing other things along that line. But there were also "recreational aides" or "community support workers," who might hang around a playground and perhaps push some kids on the swings. I was less inclined than others of my generation to question authority, but I did feel impelled to call attention to this.

> The common belief is that legal service offices are hotbeds of 'activism.' In reality, Rutgers Street was more of a divorce and welfare mill.

At the end of one typically sweltering afternoon, I approached Irv (not his real name), one of the top administrators, as he was departing, leather portfolio under arm. Irv was a somber man whose hang-dog expression suggested he had processed a few thousand too many forms in the New York City schools. "Errr," I began, "don't you think we should get out to the job sites more and make sure the kids are doing something useful?"

"Believe me," Irv intoned, with just a trace of irritation, "there is nothing you can do."

Disemburdening the camel

VISTA pay was $205 per month, which had to cover rent, food, everything. This amount was not as little as it may seem. My $49.50 per month rent included utilities, and you could get imperfect eggs and cheese at the Essex Street Market at seconds prices. Ninety-five cents would buy a weighty veal cutlet platter at the Ukrainian

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restaurants on Tompkins Square Park, or a plate of lo mein in Chinatown. For considerably less you could get a knoblewurst at Katz's. I thought I was living pretty well.

A greater problem than money was crime. There was an absurd incongruity between my rickety doorframe and the hostile world that this barrier was supposed to protect me against. My window opened out to a fire escape that seemed ominously accessible from the ground. For weeks I lay awake at night concocting medievalish devices for foiling intruders—spikes in the window sill and the like.

In the end, the obvious solution was not to fortify the camel but to disemburden it. I rid myself of everything I might worry about losing and lived in one-and-a-half rooms with only clothes, pots, and plates from a second-hand store on the Bowery, and the old radio on which I listened to Lyndon Johnson announce that he would not seek another term. Poverty is always more pleasant when it is voluntary, but the effect of lightening the load in this fashion was unexpectedly liberating. Since I had little to fear losing, New York became, in a sense, mine. In terms of friendship and experience, it was by far the richest year of my life.

Process server for the people

When the summer was over, I was assigned to one of the MFY legal services offices, the shining stars in the MFY galaxy at the time. The office was the first floor of a tenement at 26 Rutgers Street, at the far bottom of the Lower East Side, near the stanchions of the Brooklyn Bridge. The neighborhood was a living archeological dig. Around one corner, on East Broadway, sober young Hasidim in black robes and *payess* (ear curls) lined up at shul. At the other end of the street, across from the public housing projects, blacks and Puerto Ricans lined up for their late afternoon pharmaceutical trade. To the east, on East Broadway, were the Garden Cafeteria, thick with the aromas of pea soup and challeh, Noah Zark's kosher pizza, and bodegas. To the west the Chinese were spilling over from Chinatown.

The legal services office reflected this polyglot brew. The head attorney was a former youth worker named Bernie. Under him were a Puerto Rican, a black, and a WASP. There were two social workers: Ping, whose conciliatory style might have driven the confrontation types to distraction, and Nadia, who was indifferent to her beauty, both cherubic and world-wise.

> Conservatives are wary of VISTA because they see it as a haven for liberals who want to make trouble for society. But I don't see how you could fix the boiler on Henry Street without making trouble for *somebody*.

The common belief is that such offices were hot-beds of legal "activism." In reality, Rutgers Street was more a divorce and welfare mill. Ninety-five percent of the cases, it seemed, had to do with the tenuous ordering of unordered lives. I, for the most part, was a messenger. This wasn't exactly on the VISTA posters, either. But I could watch trials from the back of courtrooms and traipse around New York, with which I was infatuated. (This often included, not incidentally, traipsing through Chinatown at lunchtime, on the way to the city courts.) Being a messenger often meant being a "process server." When you start a lawsuit in New York, someone has to deliver a copy of the complaint to the person being sued. This can be interesting work.

I remember one case in which a black woman was divorcing her husband for atrocities I cannot now recall. For some reason the husband, who ran a fish and chips joint not listed in the Michelin guide, had to be served that evening. It was a blustery December night, the streets were desolate, and the scene inside the fish joint was like an Edward Hopper painting racially transposed. Men in Goodwill overcoats and tattered army jackets leaned lank and tired under a fluorescent light, cupping cigarettes in their fingers, waiting for nothing in particular. In the rear, an ox of a man was hacking away at a fish with an enormous cleaver. He was the one I had to inform that his wife was suing for divorce.

I stood across the street, looking through the cracked plate glass, watching the cleaver go up and down, whacking through the fish. I studied the faces for a hint of benevolence. I shivered, and waited; perhaps there would be a fire, or a power outage, or perhaps a rabbi would drop in

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for a chat. Finally, no such reprieve in sight, I resigned myself to my fate. I am not brave but dutiful to the core. Holding the blue-covered complaint in front of me like a soldier bearing the cross into the crusades, I entered and walked across the room. The cleaver stopped. Everything stopped. I can still feel those eyes bearing down on me. "This is for you," I forced from my mouth.

He took it, without visible emotion. Then, in a voice that seemed to rumble up from the gravel pits, that sounded like Sonny Terry hung over, "Wha's dis shit?"

Then there was the pianist, a nervous little Jewish man whose wife hated his piano playing so much that she would shut the piano lid on his fingers. He wanted a divorce. But it was a Jiggs and Maggie situation, and he was so terrified of her that he refused to point her out to me in person. This made it difficult for me to serve the complaint. Bernie devised a plan. The pianist and I would secrete ourselves in a broom closet in the senior citizen's center where Mrs. Pianist spent her afternoons. We would peer through a crack in the door. When Mrs. Pianist passed by, he would give the signal, and I would burst forth and present the notice of the divorce.

I have since suspected that Bernie was having fun with my dutifulness, but I regarded this as a solemn assignment and carried it out accordingly. The only hitch was that at first sight of his wife, Mr. Pianist lost his composure and made a break for the stairs, leaving me standing in the broom closet, its door wide open, for all to see.

With Nadia I often made social work calls, investigating family squabbles and welfare problems and occasionally taking an alcoholic husband to Bellevue or Long Island to dry out. The apartments tended to be similar. A television set along with wall hangings of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King or the pope formed the family shrine. There was vinyl-covered living room furniture and a formica dinette set. Purist that I am, the television sets surprised me. I questioned whether welfare should provide for such things and took a dim view of those who, I thought, wanted to raise the detritus of the consumer culture to a matter of right.

For this reason I was somewhat skeptical of the major lawsuit in our office of the kind that so annoys the Reagan types. We were trying to establish, to some degree, that welfare recipients should have a telephone as a matter of right. When Jefferson and the others drew up the Bill of Rights in Philadelphia, was telephone service in Lower Manhattan really what they had in mind? I didn't think so. Still, this was my team.

One of the hazards of such lawsuits is that plaintiffs have a way of disappearing. This possibility is especially distressing for legal services attorneys, to whom such suits represent a blow not only for social justice but for career advancement as well. Thus there was some anxiety on Rutgers Street when the plaintiff in the telephone case didn't appear to sign some required papers. I was dispatched to find her.

On the Lower East Side the neighborhood becomes generally worse as you go from Second Avenue on the west towards Avenue D and the river on the east. Our plaintiff, whom I will call Mrs. Martinez, lived on Avenue C, in a tenement indistinguishable from hundreds of others except that it was shabbier. The mailboxes were gouged and pried almost to the point of uselessness, and the entryway was a littered invitation to junkies and whoever else would take refuge in the building's dark recesses.

I knocked at the apartment. Again. And again. Finally there was a barely audible "Quien es [Who's there]?"

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"El abagado [the attorney]," I replied—the magic password. She opened the door a crack and then let me in. With her were a sister, or neighbor, and a little boy who seemed to be ill. Mrs. Martinez had not left the apartment for two or three days. The reason, I was told, was the Columbia riots.

The story on the street was that so many policemen had been summoned to deal with the students rioting uptown that patrols on the Lower East Side had diminished. Junkies and muggers were having a field day, and people like Mrs. Martinez were so terrified that they locked their doors for the duration. Lacking a telephone, she was not able to call a doctor, a lawyer, anyone, when her child became ill.

It is still hard for me to swallow the idea of a "right" to a telephone. But it's almost as hard for me to argue that people like Mrs. Martinez don't need one—perhaps not as a right, but as something the rest of us ought, by public policy, to provide. To the lawyers it may be a distinction without a difference. But to me it seems important that we put a little more emphasis on responsibilities and a little less on rights.

One strike against VISTA in the Reaganesque mind is that its volunteers have, on occasion, interfered with the benevolent workings of the private sector. I helped cause such interference. The private sector was in the person of an individual I will call Shepstein.

"The building had been without heat and hot water for, I believe, more than a week."

Shepstein owned two tenement buildings on Henry Street, about two blocks from the office. When one of the tenants came timidly to our office one afternoon, the building had been without heat and hot water for, I believe, more than a week. This was the dead of winter, with temperatures in single digits. Mothers were huddling with their children in front of open ovens at night to keep from freezing, while elderly ladies were burning charcoal in trash barrels. For at least two days there was no running water at all.

In the world of New York landlord-tenant relations, which resemble relations on the Iran-Iraq border, a primary weapon of battle is something called a "7A." Under a 7A tenants can withhold their rents from the landlord and pay them to a trustee, who will use the money to make needed repairs. To start a 7A the tenants must sign a petition. This is where I came in.

When I tell of my VISTA days, the "tenant organizing" is the part I take greatest pleasure in recounting, sounding as it does like service on the front lines. Actually, I pretty much just held the clipboard. At the first apartment I knocked at that cold February evening I was greeted by Mrs. Tomasita Rivera. Tomasita was somewhere in that foggy territory between 22 and 45 that Puerto Rican women enter when they have not much money and a brood of kids. She had a cap on a front tooth and moved with a kind of tomboy swagger. The bloom may have been off the rose, but her puckish humor and spunk were still there. Tomasita Rivera was a tenant organizer's dream.

Despite her imperfect English, Tomasita understood immediately what was afoot and seized hold of it like a Common Cause chapter head undertaking a good-government drive. For the next several days she and I made our evening troop through the tenements, she doing the talking with her rat-a-tat-tat Spanish, I standing there trying to nod in the right places. Despite the dire conditions, getting the signatures was not always easy. It is a rule of life in such places to minimize contacts with authority, since just about everyone has a skeleton in his or her closet, such as an undisclosed source of income that stands to be exposed. Besides, people on the financial edge just don't like to make trouble. Still, we got the

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"We celebrated the occasion with a picket line in which tenants carried placards announcing their views of Shepstein and the city administration."

signatures, calling in Ping to translate for the Chinese.

Before we could get Shepstein, however, we had to serve him with the complaint, and before we could do that, we had to find him. This was not a simple matter either, since Shepstein's only listed address was a maildrop, and repeated calls and letters went unanswered. I even tracked down elderly couples who were listed as second mortgagees on his deeds; sitting in a living room on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, I listened to one such couple lament how Shepstein had welshed on his debt to them. This was reinforcing but it didn't get me any closer to Shepstein.

Finally Bernie decided that if the maildrop was all Shepstein had listed, then the maildrop was what we would serve. It was on 42nd Street, not far from the New York Public Library. The narrow staircase looked forbidding—what ghouls and goons might Shepstein have lurking up there? As it turned out, he had neither ghouls nor goons but rather a lone woman manning a switchboard as though it were a battleship's controls. She was square-shouldered and brawny, her black hair lacquered fast, lipstick blazing, and breasts boosted atop an expanding girth, contoured by her cashmere sweater. She was fearsome, and at the sight of the legal complaint in its telltale blue binding, she exploded.

"You get that *out* of here," she shrieked. "There's no Shepstein here. You have no business. . .you get that *thing* out of here." As she was barricaded behind the switchboard, there was no way I could touch her physically with the complaint—the legal requirement of service—and I wasn't sure whether throwing it was sufficient. The only alternative was retreat. Shepstein knew his business. Minutes before I had had visions of him handcuffed before a judge, begging for mercy. Now he was off free.

This was my first failure as a process-server. I wandered down 42nd Street towards Grand Central Station, wondering what to do next. I recalled hearing somewhere that the police had to help you serve process if you asked them. It sounded unlikely, but having no better plan, I set off to find the police.

I came upon a couple of burly policemen, picking their teeth as they emerged from a luncheonette on Madison Avenue. My request seemed to puzzle them, but to my amazement, they agreed to help. As I followed them up the staircase, their shoulders just about touching the walls, I felt I now knew how Charlie Conerly, the New York Giants quarterback, felt when he dropped back into the pocket behind Jack Stroud and Roosevelt Brown. Mrs. Commando, however, was not impressed. "What did you bring *them* for?" she shrieked, with no less belligerence than before. "This is an *office*. You get them *out* of here." She was up and waving her arms, but the complaint was served. Shepstein was begging for mercy before the judge again.

Only, not quite yet. The American judicial system was not formulated with people like the Henry Street tenants in mind. To start the 7A, these tenants needed to appear in court at 10 a.m. one morning in early March—no problem for Shepstein's lawyer, but quite a production for two buildings full of tenants, some of whom were elderly and infirm. We stood in the back of the courtroom for what seemed like hours as we waited for the clerk to get to our case. When he finally did, we learned that Shepstein had somehow managed to get a postponement. Hardship, no doubt.

Finally, we obtained the court order. It was with a sense of exultation that I made the rounds with Mrs. Rivera to help collect the rents—a bit perhaps like the Sandinistas felt when they took over the Nicaraguan treasury. But the money in slum housing is not in rents; it is in such things

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as depreciation, which were of use to the landlord but of absolutely no use to ourselves. And let's be honest: not everyone pays his rent on time, and under rent control, not that much cash was coming in to begin with. My recollection is that after we had paid the bills we didn't have a great deal left over for repairs. At least this was so for the months I was there. The revolution is exhilarating. Running the state afterwards is something else.

While this 7A was working its way slowly through the esophagus of the courts, the people at Henry Street were still without heat and hot water. This was the administration of Mayor John Lindsay, and while the streets on the Lower East Side were not paved with gold, there *was* an emergency heating program, under which the city would send a truck to fill an empty oil tank and even fix the boiler. It sounded too good to be true.

It was. Every time we called, it was another story. First they said they would send an inspector. Then they said they had to contact the landlord (an inspired regulation, that). Then they said they could not do anything because the tenants weren't paying their rents to the city. Then they started sending over employees who said they couldn't do the work because they were boiler men and not plumbers; or were plumbers and not boiler men. It was totally beyond me how a city could set up a program to help desperate tenants, and then erect impediments like these.

I drafted a letter of protest to Mayor Lindsay, reciting all these difficulties and others I haven't mentioned. We translated it into Spanish and Chinese so that everyone in the two buildings could sign and sent copies to *The New York Times*. In my naivete, I thought this was the blockbuster move that would really shake up city hall. By some miracle, the letters seemed to work. Just a few days later, a city truck appeared, accompanied by a police escort and a bigshot in a brown leather trenchcoat, whose solicitous manner suggested that someone had chewed him out. We celebrated the occasion with a picket line in which tenants carried placards declaring, again in three languages, their views of Shepstein and the city administration. "No toilets," one proclaimed. "We'll all get typhoid."

By the end of the day, the heat was on. Over the past 13 years I have been engaged in various kinds of "public interest" work here in Washington. But I can think of nothing I've done in that period that helped concrete individuals the way we did when we got the boiler fixed on Henry Street.

By the late sixties, having been tamed by the investigators, MFY also was falling out of favor with the quasi-political leaders of the Lower East Side. Poverty money represented, simply, jobs and power; and leaders of local organizations were wondering why the uptown types —such was now the perception—who ran MFY were getting so much of both. Staff salaries at MFY were quite competitive, and the term "poverty pimp" was appearing in the raucous "letters" columns of *The Village Voice*.

Nevertheless, MFY had retained the contract to run the Youth Corps program for another summer, and in the spring I was transferred back to this program.

It was during the registration for this Youth Corps program that I first began to think in a serious way about what has come to be called "waste, fraud, and abuse." A long line of teenagers extended down the staircase at 255 East Houston, and I was one of the people conducting the registration on the second floor. The regulations said that only those below the "poverty level" were eligible; this meant, as best I can recall, $4,500 a year for a family of four, or $21.63 per person per week. More than that, you were too well off.

"Family income" can be a pretty nebulous concept in places like the Lower East Side. Does the niece sleeping on the couch for a few months count as "family"? What about the money your mother gets—in cash—for working in the laundromat on weekends? The way such questions were resolved was simply to ask the kids. Most offered sums safely beneath the ceiling; word does get around. A few, however, blurted out some higher figure—$4,900 perhaps or even $6,200—causing me to wince. These were invariably the nicest kids, the ones you saw dressed in white on Sundays with bibles under their arms, who showed you a deference that you didn't deserve. Still, the regulations were the regulations, weren't they? When you told them you were sorry, these kids actually thanked you, and departed as politely as they had come.

An MFY supervisor, whom I will call Enrique, came by on a routine check. Proud of my diligence, I showed Enrique my stack of rejects. He, however, was not pleased, especially about those that were near the borderline. "We do *not* want to turn those kids away," he said, in a way that made me remember, with shame, that I was after all only a guest in someone else's house.

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Enrique seated himself at my registration station and showed me how it was done. "How much do your parents make?" he asked the next person in line.

"Uh, $4,800," this teenager replied tentatively, as though wary of thin ice.

"But are you completely sure? Or is that just an estimate?"

"Uh. Uh-huh."

"Your father may have missed a week or two of work because he was sick. . .?" And so on until, if possible, the individual was down to the requisite level. It was a little like the drill a tax preparer runs you through. Enrique then turned the station back to me, and I proceeded to follow his example.

Whenever I hear Reagan recite his litany of antipoverty "abuse," I think of that Youth Corps registration, and wonder what exactly he has in mind. I wonder too whether *he* would sit there and tell a 13-year-old that he can't have a job because he may be living on a little more than $21.63 a week.

A different poverty

A year, two years, after I left the Lower East Side, my old apartment at 131 Pitt Street had become a psychedelic crash pad. A few years after that, the building had been gutted by fire. A few years after that, 131 Pitt Street was a pile of rubble. The surrounding streets that had been so alive had become a grim combat zone. In the eerie mid-day quiet, drug dealers were doing business from abandoned buildings, passing their envelopes through holes in the concrete blocks with which the city had tried to seal these buildings off. Hot dog vendors would set up their carts nearby, so brisk and open was the trade. Some blocks east of Avenue B had been virtually demolished; the neighborhood wasn't even there. 255 East Houston Street had become a branch of the New York City Department of Social Services.

"There is no demonstrable record" that VISTA had "any effect on poverty in this country." So declared James H. Burnley IV, Reagan's first VISTA chief and a Republican district chairman in North Carolina prior to his appointment. To be sure, VISTA volunteers like myself didn't make much of a dent in poverty on the Lower East Side. If there is less poverty there now, it's mainly because there are fewer dwellings in which it can reside. And as the real estate operators now move in, buying and selling the remaining buildings at enormous markups, raising rents to the $700-a-month level and even higher, making life miserable for existing low-rent tenants to force them out, there will be still fewer dwellings for those at the bottom. It is widely suspected that when Mayor Koch finally routed the pushers from parts of the Lower East Side a number of months ago, it was not entirely for the benefit of the welfare mothers there.

Still, I like to think that my year in VISTA was not totally without value. At the very least, I developed an immunity to the cliched views of poverty and how to reduce it that issue forth from people like Reagan and his counterparts on the political left. Many volunteers, especially in smaller communities and rural areas, have made a significant impact. But the primary value of a program like VISTA may be in addressing a kind of poverty that the Reaganites are inclined to overlook—the kind which causes comfortable Americans to live oblivious to the need that exists in our own country and the world. If there were not so much of this kind of poverty, there wouldn't be as much of the other kind either.

Indeed, a substantial portion of VISTA volunteers have gone on to lives of public service. A government program, of course, is hardly the only way to promote a culture of service. But the government affects our mores and culture for better or worse; abolishing VISTA, as the Reagan administration wants to do, wouldn't change that. When you consider the other things the federal government fosters and promotes—from synfuels to tobacco—at much greater expense, then VISTA stacks up fairly well by comparison.

In theory, I am inclined to agree with the Reaganites that people shouldn't expect the government to fund "social change." In practice, however, I don't see how you could get the boiler working on Henry Street without making trouble for *somebody*. Should we simply have handed out charcoal and blankets to the freezing tenants? But even if such realities are unacceptable to the Reaganites, what about the VISTA volunteers who have helped start local enterprises such as crafts co-ops for low income producers in West Virginia and South Dakota? Isn't such entreprenuership worth supporting?

VISTA hasn't eliminated poverty. But if that were the standard, capitalism would be judged a failure as well. In Washington's clamor of self-interest, we need ways like VISTA to encourage people to think about the problems of their neighbors. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

Like everyone else in Washington, the administration's officials have been looking past the election and wondering about the redivision of the spoils. But a second Reagan administration is likely to feature none of the wholesale house-cleaning that Richard Nixon practiced after his reelection in 1972....

George Shultz would prefer to leave Washington and return to the comforts of the private sector, but he'll grit it out at the State Department, if the alternative is letting **Caspar Weinberger** move into his job. Weinberger has had the time of his life as secretary of defense, but he obviously yearns to wrap up his career as secretary of state. If Shultz stays put, Weinberger will probably have to do the same (unless he can be pensioned off as ambassador to England). That in turn makes problems for **John Tower**, retiring after four terms in the Senate. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Tower has supported virtually every weapon and budget item the president has asked for: he would love to claim his reward by taking Weinberger's job. If there's no room in the Pentagon, he may go to England—or perhaps even to the UN....

Like Tower, **Jeane Kirkpatrick** also will be looking for a place to roost. She long ago announced her intention of leaving the UN and wants a position where she can continue making her speeches but not be burdened with administrative duties. A counselor's job at the White House might be ideal—especially if **Ed Meese**'s jealousies can be assuaged by his confirmation as attorney general. Now that Meese's name has been "cleared" (see "Tilting at Windmills"), the odds that Reagan will push his nomination through the Senate have improved....

One of the administration's oldest and most controversial appointees, **William Casey** of the CIA, intends to stay in place, as do two of the young and controversial officials, **John Lehman**, the secretary of the navy, and **Kenneth Adelman**, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. So where will the dramas of ambition satisfied or frustrated come from? Our sources report that the one most eager to scramble his way up is **Richard Burt**, an assistant secretary of state, who is looking for a better position at the Pentagon, or, if his dreams come true, the National Security Advisor's job. But he will have to contend with Reagan's right flank in Congress, which has never trusted him....

In

COMMERCE

Assistant Secretary for Trade Administration—**Michael Huffington** has been a senior executive with Roy M. Huffington Inc. in Houston.

STATE

Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics Matters—**Jon R. Thomas** has been deputy assistant secretary for that office.

Ambassador to Bulgaria—**Melvyn Livitsky** has been deputy director of the Voice of America.

Ambassador to Fiji and Tonga—**Carl E. Dillery** has been head of the United Nations Office of Political Affairs.

Ambassador to Singapore—**J. Stapleton Roy** has been deputy chief of mission in Thailand.

Ambassador to Syria—**William L. Eagleton Jr.** has been chief of the U.S. interests section in Iraq.

Ambassador to the Yemen Arab Republic—**William A. Rugh** has been deputy chief of mission in Syria.

TREASURY

Inspector General—**John C. Layton** has been deputy inspector general at the National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Chairman, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission—**Elliot Ross Buckley** has been a member of the commission since January 1984.

Member, Board of Governors, U.S. Postal Service—**John N. Griesemer** is president of Griesemer Stone Company in Springfield, Missouri.

Director, Voice of America—**Ernest Eugene Pell** has been program director.

Out

INTERIOR

Inspector General—**Richard Mulberry** has resigned in the wake of allegations that he did not investigate thoroughly the leaking of coal-leasing information in 1982.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Chief of Staff, Small Business Administration—**Robert W. Santy** has retired to join the accounting firm of Touche Ross & Co.

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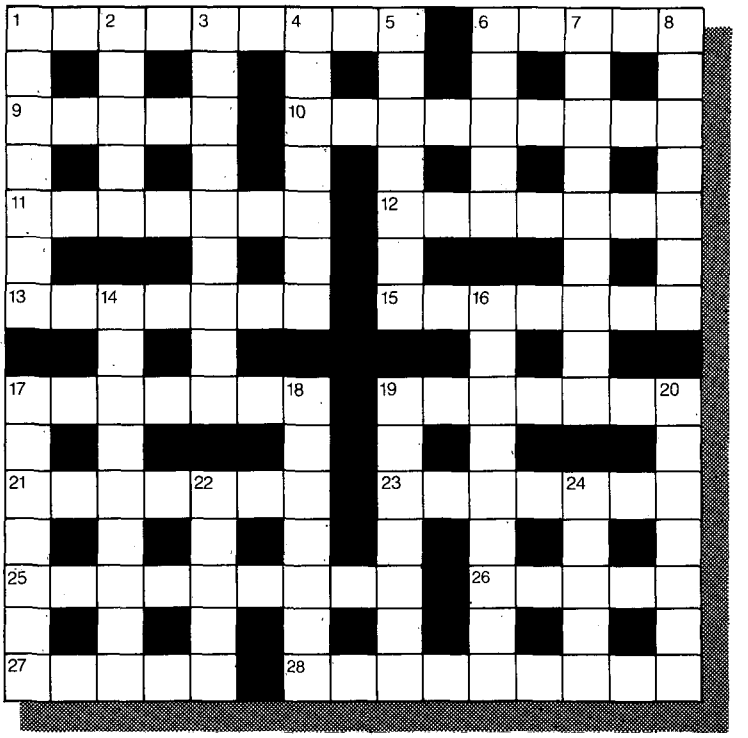
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



This month's puzzle was inspired by the Republican convention.

ACROSS

1 & 6.
I depict Western rewritten for what Reagan wants to be in the 80's. (9, 5)

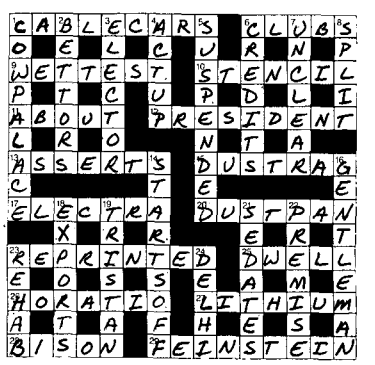
9. Tortured Pisan aches. (5)
10. One whom politics makes strange? (9)
11. Poor place from which to view low star development. (4, 3)
12. Explorer extolled in Homeric song. (7)
13. Strange red rite attempted again. (7)
15. Feelers or five points around. (7)
17. Stories about feet? (7)
19. Fights off sisters awkwardly. (7)
21. A danger lurking near Los Angeles. (7)
23. Shades Ann's cue in a way. (7)
25. Managed pier count in Northern California. (9)
26. Russian writer fixed Igor with a kilo. (5)

27 & 28.
Reagan accomplishment makes wolf rile nation. (5, 9)

DOWN

1. Well-liked taking up polar excursion. (7)
2. Marie turns around, takes in nine, and leaves. (5)
3. Editorial change turns around nine riots. (9)
4. Pushed out of Dole web. (7)
5. Rested restlessly around 500 farm implements. (7)
6. Trevino starts off for Roman landmark. (5)
7. Dreams of sick American particles? (7)
8. Encircles disturbing news din. (7)
14. Feline weapon upset grape's wit. (6, 3)
16. Feeling for the past makes Saint goal. (9)
17. Made lilac go in reasonable way. (7)
18. Wish Ali controlled African people. (7)
19. Chases snuff or reorganizes. (4, 3)
20. Meeting features noises rising around the South. (7)
22. Trial and method. (5)
24. Little dog comes in to succor giant. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Robert Reich ON POLITICAL BOOKS

During the early decades of this century the American imagination was ignited by the novellas of Horatio Alger Jr. There were more than one hundred of them in all—in 20 million copies—with titles like *Bound to Rise, Luck and Pluck, Sink or Swim,* and *Tom the Bootblack*. They inspired a generation with a single, unfailing theme: in America it was possible to rise rapidly from rags to riches. Each story was essentially the same. A fatherless, penniless boy—possessed of enormous determination, faith and courage—would seek his fortune. All manner of villains would try to entice him into a life of debauchery or to rob him of whatever small earnings he had amassed. But our hero would prevail on strength of character alone, and by the end of the story he would be a wealthy and powerful man.

Americans at the turn of the century thought they could see Horatio Alger stories personified all around them. Edward Harriman had begun as a $5 per week office boy and now headed a mighty railroad empire; John D. Rockefeller had risen from a $4 per week clerk's job in a commission merchant's house to become one of the world's richest men; Andrew Carnegie had started as a $1.20 a week bobbin boy in a Pittsburgh cotton mill only to become the nation's foremost steel magnate.

The Alger cosmology presented us with a noble ideal—a society where imagination and effort brought their just reward. But it failed to recognize other, less attractive aspects of laissez-faire capitalism. It ignored the facts that Rockefeller was destroying competitors and monopolizing the nation's oil supply, that Carnegie was brutally suppressing the first stirrings of organized labor, that Harriman was driving people from their farms through questionable legal tactics, that the gap between rich and poor was widening, and that America's cities were festering.

As the century wore on, the popular image of the rough-and-tumble entrepreneur grew increasingly anomalous within an economy of conglomerates, pension funds, money-center banks, labor unions, government agencies, and defense contractors. His search for self-fulfillment seemed out of place in a society beseiged by wars, depressions, the vestiges of racism, and inner-city enclaves of permanent poverty. His lack of formal education became a drawback in a society increasingly deferential to professional expertise. His ambition became an object of derision (what makes Sammy run?). His compulsiveness came to be seen as a menace to family life; his antisocial tendencies, a subject of psychological colloquia and frantic parent-teacher meetings. Having overvalued the entrepreneur in an earlier era, we came to undervalue him.

Now the pendulum has swung again. The entrepreneurial hero is back, to close out the century he began, and George Gilder is here to celebrate him. In his new book,* Gilder revives the Alger cosmology—with all its unfortunate excesses.

The stories Gilder relates are inspiring. His heroes brim with energy, vision, and daring. They start with nothing, Gilder tells us, and build empires by dint of sheer courage and cunning. They eschew conventional wisdom. They have faith. And, according to Gilder, they do it on their own, by themselves. There is J.R. Simplot, who rises to become Idaho's potato king; John Masters, whose inventiveness makes him an oil magnate; Milos Krofta, the founder of a sewage-treatment industry; the Parkinson brothers, whose imagination and conviction unleash a new era in semiconductors. There are Cuban immigrants, alienated teenagers, down-and-out bureaucrats, ex-executives. They are, in Gilder's words, "mostly outcasts, exiles, mother's boys, rejects, warriors, they learn early the lessons of life, the knowledge of pain, the ecstacy of struggle."

Gilder's villains are more abstract than his heroes. They are the experts and doomsayers: the top executives of huge corporations and banks who invariably lack imagination, the bureaucrats who automatically impose needless regulations, the "entitled children" of America, who think that they have a right to everything they wish for. But the worst villains by far are those who would expropriate the new-found wealth of our heroes. They are the left-leaning liberals—the socialists, communards, and intellectuals—who want to redistribute the wealth to the poor via the tax code. Taxes! Here Gilder vents his rage. The spirit of enterprise can thrive only where taxes do not.

Some of Gilder's heroes don't make it. They become ensnared in tax dodges. They are diverted from their true entrepreneurial callings, forced instead to become real estate moguls so that they

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can hold their fortunes together. Their heads are turned by all the tax credits, depreciation benefits, interest write-offs, and financing options. They metamorphose from producers of goods into manipulators of finance. They surrender their wealth to the sterile knowledge of tax laws, accounting rules, partnership-packages, real estate lore. Not even Ronald Reagan's tax planners can escape Gilder's wrath. The Capital Cost Recovery Provision embedded in the 1981 tax act further entrapped our poor heroes: it allowed depreciation of rental structures over ten years and commercial buildings over 15. This, together with the 25 percent tax credit for rehabilitating commercial buildings and the fact that real estate is about the only tax shelter that allows purchase with non-recourse loans, has made the temptation overwhelming. Gilder's heart bleeds for these misled moguls. "All these shelters, and many others, *seduce* the entrepreneur from his chosen field and into alien activity" (my italics).

It is just possible, of course, that some of these entrepreneurs helped create the loopholes in the first place. They designed them, lobbied for them, financed the elections of members of Congress who fought for them. The shelters didn't seduce them; they seduced Congress into enacting the shelters. Who else would have had an interest in creating such schemes? Yet to acknowledge this reality would be to mess up the story, to blur the distinction between heroes and villains.

The crux of Gilder's argument is that government should not confiscate the money these entrepreneurs amass. But Gilder's heroes do not need substantial wealth to fuel their ambitions. Their motivations are spiritual rather than crassly material. Their goal is not a life of leisure and luxury. Taxes do not reduce their entrepreneurial ardor. "Their chief desire," says Gilder, "is not money to waste on consumption but the freedom and power to consummate their entrepreneurial ideas." Then why worry about taxes? Because, if freed from the burden of tax, these heroes will reinvest the money they earn, creating a cornucopia of new products, services and jobs—and thereby generating far more social wealth than would government using the same funds. "Entrepreneurs must be allowed to retain the wealth they create because only they, collectively, can possibly know how to invest it productively among the millions of existing businesses and the innumerable visions of new enterprise in the world economy."

Gilder may be correct. Maybe his heroes would sooner spend their new-found fortunes on entrepreneurial ventures than exotic vacations. But in that case Gilder should have no objection to a steep tax on personal consumption, rising steadily in proportion to the amount that one spends each year on self and family. And presumably Gilder also should approve of a significant hike in gift and estate taxes, lest all this wealth—intended for daring and imaginative new products—inadvertently find its way to "entitled children." Neither of these taxes would reduce the funds available to his heroes for their entrepreneurial pursuits. Interestingly, Gilder makes no mention of these alternative means of raising public revenues.

Like his predecessor, Horatio Alger, George Gilder views the world in oversimplified terms. Even the collectivist Japanese somehow get shoehorned into entrepreneurial cowboy boots. We learn that their economic successes have been due to the ambition and vision of a few courageous men—Masaru Ibuku, founder of Sony; Konosuke Matsushita, founder of the firm that bears his name; and Soichiro Honda. But it strains history and common sense to attribute the present-day successes of these giant companies solely to these lone visionaries; what about MITI, that instrument of state intervention? Gilder is equally simplistic in his discussion of the energy crisis, which he calls "a religious disorder, a failure of faith." As for the economy, he makes the preposterous claim that it has boomed ever since 1978, when Congress cut the capital gains tax (presumably those of us who remember the severe recessions of 1979 and 1981-2 suffer from a "religious disorder"). Bankruptcies are a sign of economic progress. America's population of entrepreneurs comprises 30 million people, a near majority of our working citizens. I could go on—hyperbole piled on top of purple prose—but you get the drift.

It is too bad that Gilder succumbs to such rosy visions, because he says several useful and truthful things that get buried under the excess. Gilder is correct, for example, in his criticism of mainstream economics for failing to acknowledge the central importance of innovation. Most economists are content to measure only those

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parts of the economy that stay static long enough to be measured. They thereby ignore the most dynamic parts. For example, data on productivity improvements—increases in output per unit of input—typically overlook improvements in quality and reductions in costs. And yet, *these* changes may be far more telling than simple increases in the output of identical commodities. By standard measures the computer and semiconductor industries constitute relatively unimpressive parts of the economy.

By the same token, conventional economics tends to view national wealth in terms of items bought and sold, physical capital, mineral resources, and other tangibles. But in fact, our most precious national wealth is found in the potential carried around within people's heads—their skills, creativity, imagination, capacities to solve problems, abilities to work together. "With its circular flows of purchasing power, its invisible-handed markets, its intricate interplays of goods and money, all modern economics...resembles a vast mathematical drama, on an elaborate stage of theory, without a protagonist to animate the play."

For much the same reason, conventional economics has not yet come to terms with what is known in business-school lingo as the "experience curve." Put simply, this is the tendency of manufacturing costs to fall as volume increases—due not just to economies of scale but also to accumulated learning about how to improve the production process. Many economists still assume that, at some point, production costs will start moving upward, toward a "natural" or "equilibrium" price at which supply and demand neatly intersect. The fact is that for a broad range of products costs can keep falling. And *this* means that an aggressive and courageous manufacturer could set his prices far below current production costs, in anticipation of a large market that would, in turn, justify a much larger production run—and far lower production costs.

The "experience curve" works on the consumer side as well. As customers of a new product gain experience using it, they may find new uses for it. It becomes a necessity. The lower the price, the more consumer experience; the more consumer experience, the more sales; the more sales, the lower the price, and so on. To envision these two sides of the experience curve in action you need only consider the recent explosion in Yuppie electronics—pocket radios, tummy TVs, digital cameras, video cassette recorders, home computers, stereophonic running gear. Gilder has it right, allowing for his tendency toward hyperbole: "The knowledge—of inventors, entrepreneurs, producers, and consumers—which accumulates through the ongoing waves of human experience—is the most crucial curve and capital of industrial progress."

All this means that expenses that contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and skills are really investments in the future—even if they fail to produce immediate profits. Gilder may be too sanguine about the rise in bankruptcies generally, but he is correct when he points out that some bankruptcies may signal risk-taking and experimentation on the way to new breakthroughs rather than economic decline. This kind of experimentation does not merely respond to already established markets, but creates new ones. It *does* require a certain amount of imagination and daring. By focusing relentlessly on tangible resources and the exchange of pre-existing goods and services, conventional economics overlooks this vital center.

Gilder also warns us against capitalist entropy. Laws and rules that favor established companies, certified borrowers, immobile forms of pay, pensions, and institutionally managed savings will be biased toward the status quo. We need to ensure that capital flows easily to small businesses and new ideas. Managers who diversify their businesses into fields they know nothing about, who follow the herd and play by the financial numbers, will fail to create new wealth. The system must be flexible enough to allow people to take risks, but the people who take the risks must know enough about the grease and grit of their businesses to make the risks worthwhile.

'Collective entrepreneurialism'

Gilder's emphasis on the dynamics of capitalism is well placed. His fatal flaw is an inability to distinguish between invention and production.

America's cowboy entrepreneurs are terrific at coming up with novel products, new services, innovative processes. This is not a recent phenomenon. We have always had an abundance of tinkerers and inventors. America continues to lead the world in scientific discoveries, technical breakthroughs, Nobel laureates. But we often have had difficulty turning our ideas into commercial products. We get bogged down somewhere between invention and production.

The pattern has been repeated constantly over the past 20 years and continues today: we invent the basic technology—solid-state transistors, radial tires, automobile stamping machines, open-hearth furnaces for making steel, robotics,

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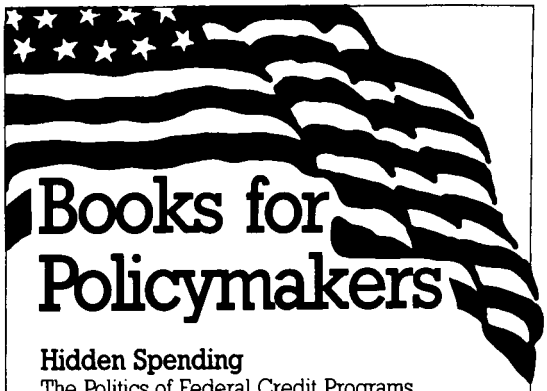
computer-controlled machine tools, videocassette circuitry, semiconductors. Then the citizens of another country—often the Japanese—commercialize it. We end up buying our technology back from them—within cars, steel, robots, computer-aided manufacturing systems, computer chips, and all manner of Yuppie electronics. They simply are better able to turn the technology into inexpensive, high-quality products.

We make money from licensing our technology to them. They make money by selling the technology back to us, encased within terrific products. This would be a fine trade except for the fact that along the way, a large number of them gain a great deal of knowledge and experience about how to make products that people want, extraordinarly cheaply and well. We don't build up this sort of experience. And only a comparatively few of us gain very much experience inventing the new technologies to begin with. Making products is a complex social activity, depending upon unique organization. It's a form of *collective* entrepreneurialism. Our backyard tinkerers and inventors, by contrast, often work alone or in very small groups.

Experience in *making* products generates more social wealth than does inventing them. Not only does production experience raise the overall level of skills in the population, but it also can be applied generally, across all kinds of goods and services—not just the latest inventions. And it leads to just those sorts of small, incremental improvements in products and processes that can mean all the difference in terms of price, quality and marketability. Microcircuitry leads to the pocket radio; the pocket radio, in turn, becomes the "walkman;" the walkman evolves into a whole new world of exotic electronics for the mobile upwardly-mobile.

Basic inventions, on the other hand, don't necessarily alter and enrich the populations in which they occur. They don't raise the overall level of skills or generate broad experience. They can flow across national boundaries at the speed of an electronic impulse. Blueprints devised in Palo Alto reach Seoul and Taipei almost as soon as they reach Nashville.

The Japanese well understand this new reality. That's why they would rather invest in production experience than in invention. True, the Japanese have started to manufacture some of their products in the United States, employing American workers. They are building cars in California, trucks in Tennessee, stereo equipment in Arkansas. But look again. These are assembly



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operations. The complex components that go into the products are all made in Japan. Even the semiconductors that the Japanese are starting to fabricate in the United States represent the most standardized segment of that market, for which all the jobs are relatively routine. Not much production experience can be gleaned from putting together kits of sophisticated pieces all made in Japan. The most valuable learning continues to occur across the Pacific. Meanwhile, the Japanese forestall protectionist sentiment in the United States, and at the same time create a captive market abroad for their sophisticated components. Smart.

Why is this happening? American companies simply don't want to invest in production experience nearly as much as the Japanese because production experience is essentially *social*. It exists in the relationships among engineers, fabricators, technicians, and marketers. You can't patent it. You can't enslave your newly-experienced workers. All you can do is hope they stick together—or help build a shared commitment so they will want to. American managers won't make these social investments because, by and large, they are incapable of—or unwilling to—transform their enterprises into such communities.

Gilder fails to reconcile his praise for the lonely genius, the maverick, the visionary who is forever quitting his old job to start something new, with this fundamentally collective component of prosperity. It is not, to be sure, an easy task. Take Japan, which has had relatively few major technical breakthroughs, but which continues to beat us at production. The secret of its success is ultimately traceable to that society's overwhelming emphasis on social cohesion, its tightly woven network of economic and social obligations. Gilder's entrepreneurial heroes—and, indeed, most of us—would find that kind of environment stifling and paternalistic, the sandboxes too small, too identical, too crowded. We like our freedom. But it is well to remember that freedom and community lie along a very wide path—wide enough for many different routes linking one to the other. In the years ahead we will, I hope, continue to explore a variety of routes for gaining and sharing prosperity while maintaining liberty—in our companies, our politics, our voluntary associations.

George Gilder understands part of the dynamic of capitalism. But his stories, like those of Horatio Alger, mask a social reality having little in common with the derring-do of their heroes. It is a reality which requires substantial investments in our people—in their capacities to learn together. It requires that we build and nurture working communities, that we foster collective entrepreneurialism. ■

Journalists Invited to Apply for the 1985-86 Congressional Fellowship Program

The American Political Science Association (APSA) invites broadcast and print journalists to apply for the 33rd annual, 1985-86 Congressional Fellowship Program. This program, which begins November 1985 and ends August 1986, gives journalists interested in national government and politics the opportunity to work as congressional aides for 10 months. Congressional Fellows also attend a one-month orientation program and weekly seminars with some of the nation's leading politicians and scholars in American politics. A stipend of $16,000, plus some travel and health insurance, is paid to the Fellows by the APSA.

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

■

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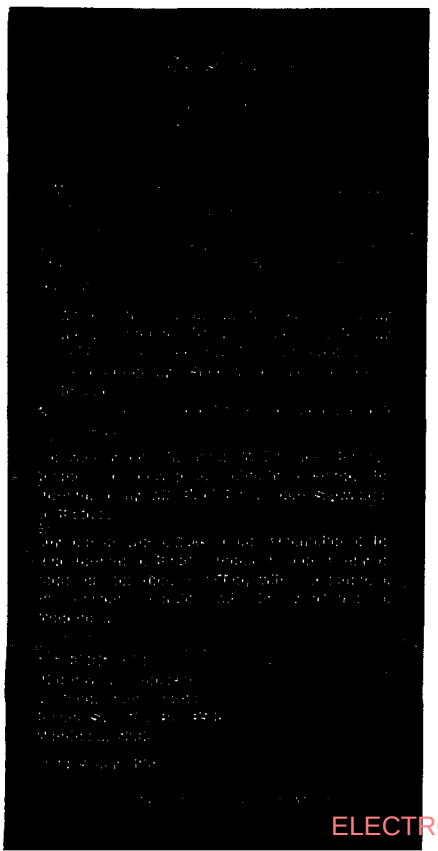

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'Dear, where are the workman's compensation forms? I just broke a nail.'

"I've just gone on Medicare and Social Security and I'm so relieved," Nancy Hamon, the Dallas socialite, told a reporter for *W*, the fashion publication. "I always wanted to be socially secure." According to *W*, Hamon and her husband, independent oilman Jake Hamon, are "one of the state's wealthiest [couples], probably worth $1 billion."

■

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

The New Politics of Inequality. Thomas Byrne Edsall. *Norton, $15.95.* Why has federal economic policy—on taxes, government spending, regulation, and practically everything else dealing with money—shifted so hard to the right in recent years? Don't just say "Ronald Reagan." The shift began well before his ascendancy, and while Reagan's programs certainly have accentuated the trend, they found approval in a House of Representatives under overwhelming Democratic control.

In his book Thomas Edsall provides a persuasive and comprehensive explanation of what has happened—one that goes far beyond pointing to the president's winsome smile. Anyone who has admired Edsall's brilliant financial and political reporting at *The Washington Post* (and, as a friend and occasional source, I certainly have) will not be surprised to find that his book is as good as it is. But many of those who type themselves as "reformers" may be a bit taken aback. For among the causes of the current skewing of economic policy in favor of the affluent, says Edsall, are "reforms" ostensibly designed to improve the quality and fairness of representation in Washington but which ironically have played a key role in producing just the opposite.

The story Edsall tells begins with a simple and fundamental political truth: elected officials tend to represent the interests of those who put them in office and who hold the power over whether they stay there. There's nothing sinister about this; to the contrary, it's what representative democracy is supposed to be about. But over the past decade and a half there have been major changes—often styled "reforms"—in the way we choose our representatives in Washington and in the pressures they are subject to once they get there. Edsall shows that these changes have helped fragment the Democratic party and undercut its ability to represent its historic constituency, while bringing new cohesiveness to the Republican party.

For starters, take the replacement of closed-door backroom deals with primaries and open caucuses as the way Democrats now choose most of their candidates. The good-government types who promoted these reforms thought that by "broadening participation" they would produce more responsive and equitable government policies.

But Democratic primaries, while open to all, are not participated in by all. To the contrary, they typically are dominated by the richest sectors of the Democratic electorate—the yuppies and the upper middle class, whose concern about liberalism on "social issues" is generally not matched by any enthusiasm for sacrificing their own economic self-interest to protect the interests of the less well off. Nor do these "elites," as Edsall calls them, have either the inclination or the ability to bring the lower-income Democrats to the polls on election day against Republican opponents.

In contrast, the "hacks" and "bosses," whose influence has been curtailed by the reform movement, traditionally had built their power base on getting out the vote among poorer Democrats. They therefore felt the political necessity—the self-interest if you will—of choosing Democratic candidates who, once elected, would provide a good representation and a share in the spoils of office to the party's core constituency of working-class and lower-income Americans. Thus, the disadvantaged and the bosses had a stake in each other. Indeed, as Edsall points out, that convergence of interest made the Democratic party a major engine for upward social mobility, particularly in the era beginning with Franklin Roosevelt's presidency.

Edsall concludes that, by defeating the bosses, the reformers unwittingly reduced the political power of lower-income Americans—and thereby helped shift federal economic policy to the right. With direct patronage-based incentives to go to the polls reduced and with the precinct lieutenants and ward captains largely pushed aside, turnout in general elections by the less well off has fallen sharply. While white-collar workers were just 25 percent more likely to vote than blue-collar workers in 1964, for example, by 1980 the white-collar voting advantage had jumped to 48 percent.

—*Robert S. McIntyre*

The New American Poverty. Michael Harrington. *Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $17.95.* Harrington, whose 1963 book, *The Other America,* helped inspire the war on poverty, reports 21 years later that "the poor are still there." By Harrington's count, there remain 40 to 50 million Americans living in poverty, which is about what there were when he wrote *The Other America.* What went wrong?

One key problem noted by Harrington was the assumption that poverty could be eliminated without taking from the rich to give to the poor. "In point of political fact," writes Harrington, "if there were a major effort to end poverty in a short time—and particularly in the eighties, when the illusion of endless growth has long since vanished—it will have to be redistributionist." Harrington notes that our present system of social welfare is geared primarily to the elderly, "most of whom are not now, and for a long time have not been, poor." Indeed, of the $316.6 billion in the 1981 federal budget allocated for payments to individuals, less than $43 billion went to the poor.

Unfortunately, Harrington is not willing to face up to the logical consequence of these facts: that we need to siphon money away from

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the welfare state's well-off beneficiaries in order to redistribute income to its poorer ones. Harrington denounces means-tested welfare programs as "humiliating" and "reactionary." In fact, a means-tested welfare program that provided generously for the poor (as present welfare programs, admittedly, do not) would be just the radical solution to income inequality that Harrington seeks.

—*Timothy Noah*

Disabling America: The Rights Industry of Our Time. Richard E. Morgan. *Basic Books, $16.95.* Morgan, a professor of constitutional law at Bowdoin College, argues that a "rights industry" composed of judges, activist lawyers, and law professors has, during the past two decades, expanded and manipulated the law of civil rights to create new rights that have little or no constitutional basis, and are therefore illegitimate. Morgan is an "interpretivist," which means he thinks that judges deciding constitutional issues should confine themselves to enforcing norms that are stated or clearly implicit in the Constitution. Ostensibly he is arguing against many of the civil rights decisions of the Warren Court on the basis that they are "noninterpretivist"—that the court was enforcing norms it considered "right" for society, rather than norms that can be discovered specifically in the Constitution.

But Morgan undermines his credibility as a disinterested constitutional scholar by making much of his book an attack not merely on the judicial means by which liberal policies are implemented, but also on the policies themselves. For example, in his treatment of *Swann* vs. *Charlotte Mecklenberg Board of Education*, which gave us busing, Morgan spends just as much time trying to prove that court-enforced busing is the single biggest reason for the decline of American public schools as he does supporting his contention that *Swann* has a shaky constitutional foundation.

—*Teresa Riordan*

Safe Places for the 80's. David and Holly Frank. *Dial, $18.95.* Like most white millionaires, you've no doubt asked yourself, "Where can I live a life unsullied by the spectre of Roving Gangs of Negro Youths?" Fortunately, there's a book suited to your needs, offering state-by-state descriptions of largely affluent towns and villages with relatively low crime rates. Near San Francisco in Marin County, for instance, you might pick up a little bungalow for a mere $500,000 in lovely Belvedere (pop. 2,599). The authors do recommend some less pricey towns, of course, in their overview of "safe places," but they offer little hope for anyone who might actually want to live in a city and virtually nothing for readers seeking insights into stopping crime.

The book, despite its impressive compilations of housing prices, scenery, school quality and the like, also embodies the sort of smug mentality that gives affluence a bad name. Working from the assumption that cities are hopeless snake pits stalked by psychopaths, the authors are completely indifferent to the fate of millions of Americans without the means or opportunity to move tomorrow to their recommended havens. Thus, there's no mention of the successful efforts of cities like Detroit that have cut crime up to 60 percent in some neighborhoods through the use of Neighborhood Watch programs.

The New American Dilemma

Liberal Democracy and School Desegregation

Jennifer L. Hochschild

When traditional democratic methods are used to desegregate schools, both blacks and whites end up worse off—with little freedom and equality for blacks, much disruption and pain for both races, and few educational gains for anyone. However, says Hochschild, the evidence shows that school desegregation can succeed if rapid and extensive change is imposed by non-elected officials and without citizen involvement.

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Yet some of the features of the authors' safe places *can* be adapted to the lower-income, more urban neighborhoods they scorn. These include such vital intangibles as close public-citizen cooperation, a strong sense of community and small-scale, decentralized crime programs.

The book does offer valuable information and some hopeful examples. Perhaps most inspiring is the small, all-black town of Glenarden, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. Glenarden neatly challenges the racist assumption that equates black neighborhoods with high crime rates. It's a close-knit, attractive middle-class community of less than 5,000 with a dedicated police force and civic pride. It's too bad the authors didn't spend more time trying to understand what makes towns like Glenarden really work, rather than simply advising readers to head for the hills with a few hundred thousand dollars in spare change.

(Special note: Boston is the unsafest city, and West Virginia the safest state, measured by crimes per 100,000 population.)

—Art Levine

The Minimal Self. Christopher Lasch. *Norton, $16.95.* The author of *The Culture of Narcissism* has written a strong indictment of our political culture, which he says is dominated by a concern for individual survival and little else. Our approach to politics and everyday life, Lasch says, has been shaped by the unhappy developments of our time—the Nazi holocaust, the arms race, the bureaucratization of everyday life, and environmental degradation. We have adopted a doomsday mentality that leads us in the two directions depicted in the Louis Malle film, *My Dinner with Andre*. Some, like Wally, content themselves with the mundane pleasures of ordinary life; others, like Andre, gamely seek "spiritual transcendence." Few of us have gotten into the political arena to better the world. The political fights we *have* joined are single-issue oriented and tend to alienate rather than unite. Their stress on merely surviving, Lasch says, "tends to strengthen the inertia it seeks to overcome."

Lasch's argument is wide-ranging and original. But he spends just six of the book's 259 pages exploring how we can get out of our false structures of "mysticism, spirituality [and] the power of 'personhood.' " His answer is "practical reason," an Aristotelian term for hammering out problems as one community rather than as members of distinct interest groups. It's too bad Lasch doesn't flesh this argument out. He only alludes to this argument's logical conclusion—strengthen our party system, increase employee control of the workplace, and get more involved in the broad issues of local government.

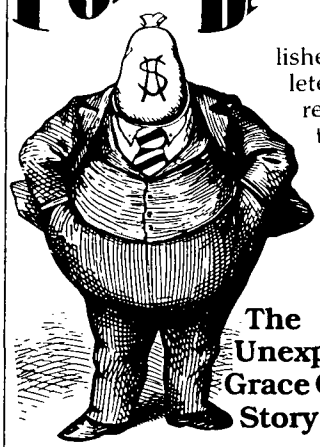
—Charles Euchner

Flying High. Wayne Greenhaw. *Dodd, Mead, $15.95.* The drug-running story has become tiresome. How many more of these low flights to rural landing strips, undercover agents on the ground, conniving offshore bankers, venal unloaders, and powerful local politicians with a hands-off attitude can we take? Greenhaw is a reporter from Alabama. One consequence of smugglers leaving Florida for other parts of America is that every newspaper can follow the same trail from its county airport to the hills of Colombia.

What such accounts usually lack, and this book is no exception, is any hint that the author sees the absurdity in enforcement. On the first page the attorney general reminds us that marijuana and cocaine are the nation's biggest business, and then for 200 pages beyond we hear of the noble frustrations of stopping it. A federal task force aligned against the Miami rum-runners in the 1920s got snickers even in *The New York Times.* Vice President Bush's task force, equally laughable, gets wide-eyed treatment in books like Greenhaw's.

Greenhaw has an interesting chapter on how the Somocistas ran the Nicaraguan marijuana business, a story that has been told before, but not so convincingly. It is plain

PORK BARREL



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that drugs are the price of our anti-communism in Latin America, just as Albert McCoy argued they were in Southeast Asia. The secret war against Castro in the 1960s produced a generation of Miami smugglers who sent guns in one direction and controlled substances in the other; the same set-up, Greenhaw implies, exists in Central America today. All our private airstrips and the little armies we cannot admit we finance are the perfect conduits for the drugs we cannot admit we import. This trade-off, incidental or deliberate, makes a mockery of the federal pronouncements and is deserving of further exploration.

—John Rothchild

The Government/Press Connection: Press Officers and Their Offices. Stephen Hess. *Brookings, $22.95.* Hess spent a year doing one- to three-month live-ins at the press offices of four federal agencies and the White House, and his book is a reasoned, if limited, study of how information about government doings gets to the public.

From the exalted role of press secretary to the more routine work of the career press officer, the lot of the government press man is not always a happy one. The press corps regards him with suspicion as a protector of the elected officials or as part of the bureaucracy; the politician and the bureaucracy suspect that his sympathies are too much with the prying press. In the case of the career press officer, the Washington press corps regards him as a failed journalist—a view that, as it pertains to some press officers, is valid but as a generalization reflects, I believe, the arrogance conferred by the press's power.

Even Hess's own attempt to be kind is not quite successful. While noting that the *good* press officers he met seemed on at least an intellectual par with most reporters he studied, he also failed to find any career press officer "with that combination of analytical ability, writing skill, and overdrive that is apparent in the best reporters."

Of major concern to the public is the question of whether the press officer manipulates the press, and Hess's answer is, probably not as much as most people think. The temptation to manipulate is greatest at the highest—the press secretary—level, where politics and even questions of the national interest are on the line. Outright lying is rare—but the use of half-truths to mislead reporters is part of the game. A reporter who asks whether a special envoy is being sent to the Soviet Union and accepts at face value a press officer's reply, "No decision has been made," is something of a schlemiel. In the press officer's linguistic casuistry, the decision that has, in fact, been reached, is "made" only when the secretary of state signs the cable.

In the book's most interesting section, Hess deals with the important press-government connection outside the domain of the press officers: leaks. Various motivations inspire leaks: the irresistible urge of a congressman to share an administration "secret" with the press, a bureaucrat's desire to derail a policy he abhors, the opportunity for high political figures to undercut a rival. One of the more spectacular leaks of recent years occurred in a Bob Woodward *Washington Post* story—on the basis of notes taken by a participant at one of Secretary of State Alexander Haig's senior staff meetings, Woodward reported that Haig had called Lord Carrington, the British foreign secretary, "a duplicitous bastard," and although various motives for the leak were suggested, the most plausible was that someone was out to get old Al.

Hess is undoubtedly correct in his opinion that leaks are among the less rational systems of communication between the government and the public and that they interfere with the president's ability to make an orderly presentation of his case to the people; he is also correct when he writes, "to stop leaks, presidents resort to wiretaps and lie detectors. They always fail. In a system of such breathtaking diversity they always will."

—Leonard Reed

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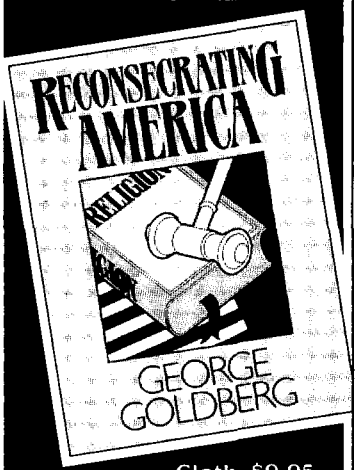

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(continued from page 4)
In the late 1960s, Jim introduced and shepherded through Congress legislation that amended the federal criminal code to repeal laws prohibiting dissemination of birth control information and devices. Jim was also the original sponsor of the Family Planning Services Act of 1970, which later became Title X of the Public Health Service Act. That Act was, and is, the only program designed to help poor women and teenagers avoid unwanted pregnancies.

In 1977, Jim was the original sponsor and later chairman of the House Select Committee on Population. This committee was widely acclaimed for its landmark work on domestic and international population issues.

Few public policy areas are as crucial as population and development and few afford so little immediate political benefit. Jim's tenacious and effective leadership in this area over 20 years has earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues.

DON EDWARDS
Washington, D.C.

Don Edwards is a representative from California.

At the very time your September issue was hitting the newsstands, Jim Scheuer was leading a congressional delegation to the International Conference on Population in Mexico City. He organized the opposition to the official, Reagan-appointed delegation there, which had been promoting a short-sighted policy of curtailing family planning resources in Third World countries. As a result of Jim's efforts, the Reagan delegation backtracked and released a substantial amount of family planning funds they had previously withheld.

I have worked with Jim over the years on everything from the ERA to the Family Planning Services Act (now Title X of the Public Health Services Act), which he originally sponsored. He has been a tireless advocate of women's rights. Best of all, after nine terms in the House he has lost neither his sense of humor nor outrage.

PAT SCHROEDER
Washington, D.C.

Pat Schroeder is a representative from Colorado.

I believe your article rating members of the House of Representatives in your September issue missed the mark.

As a member of the New York congressional delegation, I've worked with Congressman James H. Scheuer for over a dozen years on issues of importance to our city and state. His record of effectiveness on health, environment, and on law enforcement has earned him the respect of his colleagues. It was Jim's legislation which established the National Institute for Criminal Justice. Jim was also the original sponsor of legislation which provides federal funds for states to establish antifraud units with both investigative and prosecutorial power to combat Medicaid fraud and abuse. Jim authored legislation which created an office of drug abuse control in the White House and of legislation which established a drug rehabilitation program with a priority for Vietnam-era veterans.

I could go on and on, but I think the point is clear. A member of Congress doesn't pass legislation if he doesn't have the respect of his colleagues. Congressman Scheuer has the respect of his colleagues. Jim's record of accomplishment is impressive by anyone's standard.

MARIO BIAGGI
Washington, D.C.

Mario Biaggi is a representative from New York.

Your recent article ranking members of Congress stated that "consumer activists really weren't sorry" to see Jim Scheuer lose his post as chairman of a consumer protection subcommittee. As chairman of the Energy and Commerce subcommittee with responsibility for overseeing the fate of the Federal Trade Commission during the height of the antiregulatory, lynch-mob frenzy that swept over Congress in the 1970s, Jim Scheuer stood firm against the tide. He fought for the FTC's funeral rule, he fought for preserving the FTC against crippling amendments, and he prevailed.

Since that time he has consistently supported regulations to protect the health and safety of consumers—from his leadership on airbag legislation, to his probing of EPA abdication of its duties to protect the public's health under Anne Burford's reign, to his opposition to the Reagan administration's weakening of consumer protection laws. His support has been there on virtually every major consumer issue to come before Congress.

MICHAEL PERTSCHUK
Washington D.C.

Michael Pertschuk is a former member of the Federal Trade Commission.

How we sank the Bismarck

Mr. Easterbrook pronounces in your September issue ["What Caspar Weinberger Could Learn from the Falklands"] that the German battleship *Bismarck* was "sunk by aircraft." This is a most imaginative interpretation and would support your journal's defense policy were it true. Repeated air strikes against the *Bismarck* from the British carrier *Ark Royal* were generally ineffective but did finally damage *Bismarck* steering gear to permit the British battleships *King George V* and *Rodney* to overtake the swifter German ship. The *Bismarck* was then put out of action by naval gunfire and left sinking. Torpedoes from the cruiser *Dorsetshire* completed the sinking after the *Bismarck* crew had abandoned ship.

It would be pleasing for your staff if *Bismarck* had been sunk by cheap, effective jump jets using cheap, effective bombs taking off from cheap, effective cargo ships, but regrettably this did not happen. I might suggest that your writers employ a method others have found useful—research—but that would handicap your editorial campaigns and render your magazine less amusing and entertaining. Instead I submit his name in nomination for a new *Washington Monthly* award, the James Fallows Defense Fiction Prize.

EUGENE H. BALOF
Florence, Alabama

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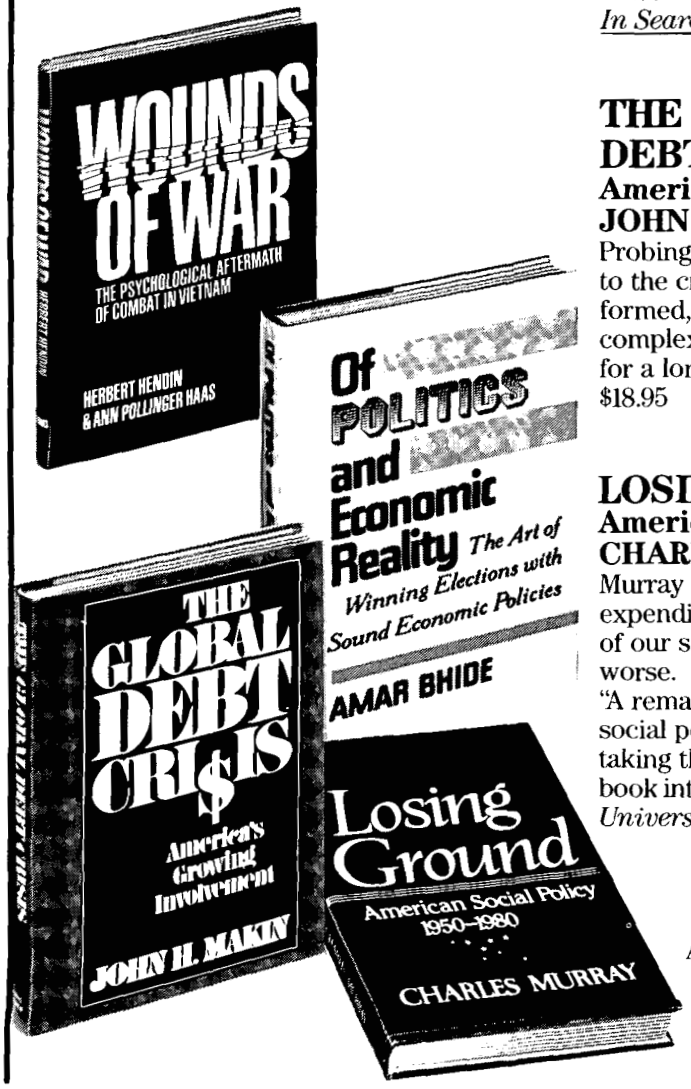

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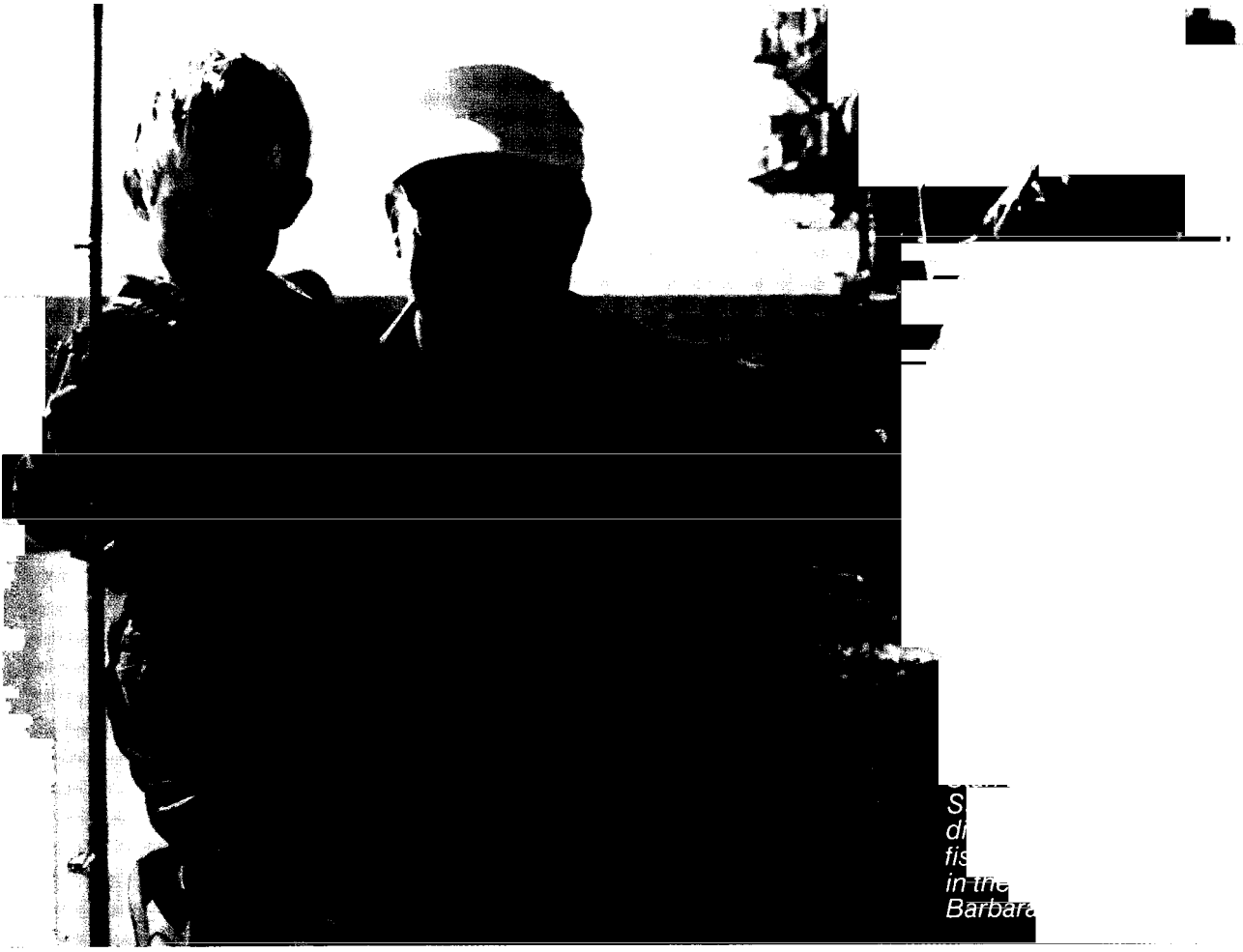

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